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J. RAMSAY MacDONALD

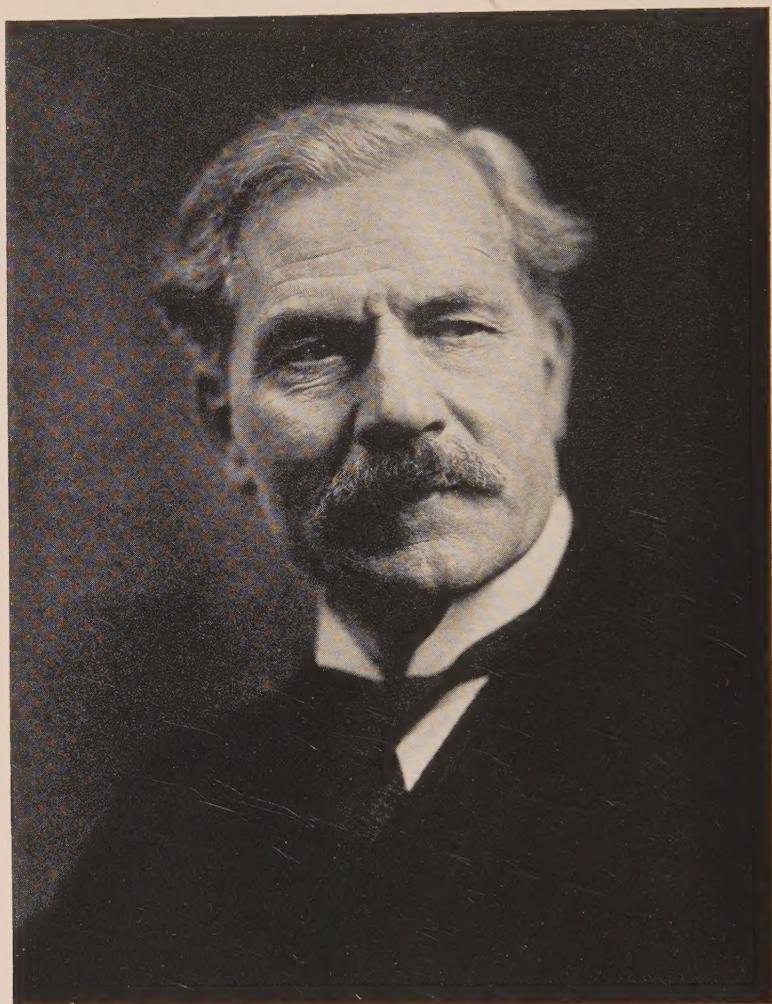
LABOR'S MAN OF DESTINY



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THE RT. HON. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, P.C., M.P., PRIME MINISTER OF GREAT BRITAIN

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# J. R A M S A Y M A C D O N A L D

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LABOR'S MAN OF DESTINY

By  
H. HESSELL TILTMAN

*With Sixteen Illustrations from Photographs*



*"They say; what say they? Let them say."*

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## FOREWORD

THE rapid rise of the Labor Party to its present position in British politics has been made possible by two decisions, the effects of which could not have been foreseen at the time when they were made. The first was to christen the new party "Labor," and thus at a stroke attach to it the traditions and aspirations of the working masses of this country.

The other piece of good fortune was the discovery, within the Socialist ranks, of a Parliamentarian as statesmanlike as any political leader of our generation—James Ramsay MacDonald.

No man in our history has so surely placed the imprint of his personality upon a political movement as this village boy from Morayshire, who once starved in a London garret and who later spoke to the world as the Prime Minister of Great Britain. From the day when he prepared the resolution, passed by the Trade Union Congress in 1899, which brought the Labor Party into being, until he drafted the program contained in *Labour and the Nation*, it has been Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's hand which has guided the Party from strength to strength.

Since the day when only three Labor members sat at Westminster until the Party became His Majesty's Opposition, and, later, attained office for the first time, he has been the architect of its fortunes and its pilot through the political quicksands which have threatened to engulf it. He planned the route to the Promised Land—he still marches at the head of the forces attracted to Labor's banner. And at sixty-three years of age he remains its unchallenged leader.

This volume attempts to present, I believe for the first time, a fully documented and unbiased account of that remarkable career. Its sole aim is to state the facts about Ramsay MacDonald—what he has said, thought, and done during a life of extraordinary interest. The reader is presented with the evidence

on which posterity will eventually judge the achievements of Labor's first Prime Minister, and the picture has been kept unblurred, as far as possible, by any personal observations or reflections.

In two respects at least, I believe this book will perform a useful purpose. In its pages is presented, by some hundreds of quotations from Mr. MacDonald's speeches, a more authentic account than has been formerly available of the development of his political beliefs. The speeches and articles reproduced in the appendices are placed on record for the first time in permanent form. These statements have been chosen either because of their purport, or on account of the light which they shed upon Mr. MacDonald's views at some important point in his career.

In view of the fact that many of the matters dealt with are still subjects of political controversy, I wish, in acknowledging my indebtedness to Mr. MacDonald for permission to reproduce certain speeches and extracts from his books, and for his courtesy in placing at my disposal much information otherwise unobtainable, to state definitely that the responsibility for the statements made and the conclusions drawn, is wholly mine. Nothing in these pages has been inspired or suggested by Mr. MacDonald.

Finally, I cannot express the spirit in which I undertook my task better than by quoting a passage from the Foreword which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald himself wrote to the *Life of Keir Hardie*:

"The purposes of biography are manifold, but they have this common end: to interpret the subject and show forth what manner of man he was of whom the writer writes. That done faithfully, the biographer can launch his work upon the waters and trust to the winds and the currents for a prosperous voyage."

H. HESSELL TILTMAN



J. RAMSAY MacDONALD

LABOR'S MAN OF DESTINY



# J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

## LABOR'S MAN OF DESTINY

### CHAPTER I

#### THE "LOSSIE LOON"

ON a January morning in 1924 a taxi-cab drove through the entrance gates of Buckingham Palace and pulled up at the door through which enter those called to special audience with His Majesty the King.

There was no crowd around the railings to watch its arrival. No one but the police and officials on duty evinced any interest in the tall, spare man with dark compelling eyes and iron-gray mustache, who a few minutes later was ushered into audience with his King.

Yet within a few hours the whole world was echoing the news that Mr. James Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., had been received at Buckingham Palace and had presented to His Majesty King George V a list of the Ministers appointed to serve in the first Labor Government to control the destinies of the British Empire.

Labor as a political force may know greater triumphs than that. It almost certainly will. But whatever fortune may have in store for the British Labor Party, it is doubtful whether any of its members—veterans or younger generation—will again experience the thrill which was theirs when they read the headline—"King Sends for Mr. MacDonald"—and realized that eighteen years after Labor's first real attempt to dominate the Mother of Parliaments, a Labor administration was in being.

It was a moment of triumph for the whole world of Socialism and political Labor, from its Ministers-to-be to the humblest voter in its ranks. But it was a moment of even greater triumph for one man—the man upon whose sturdy shoulders lay the task of steering the new Government safely through the shoals which, none knew better than he, lay ahead.

Six years previously the Right Honorable James Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., had been the most hated man in Great Britain. His pacifist activities during the war had caused him to be execrated by his own countrymen to a degree happily rare in our public life. Leicester, which he had represented in Parliament for twelve years, rejected him and sent him into the wilderness by giving his opponent the record majority of 14,000. The size of that majority was a token of the national distrust and of the discredit which attached to the man.

It needed flawless character and sterling ability to live down such a vendetta. Ramsay MacDonald did live it down. He did more. Within a day or so of returning to the House of Commons in 1922 he was reelected Chairman of the Parliamentary Labor Party, and occupied once more the high position from which he had been deposed in 1914.

Those who to-day are fond of saying that Ramsay MacDonald is not "strong" as a political leader would do well to remember the strength which, rightly or wrongly, he showed at that crisis of his career in 1914, when all seemed lost, and he preferred that it should be so rather than sacrifice what he held to be the truth.

To tell the record of the years during which he mounted steadily with toil, enthusiasm and self-sacrifice from poverty to the ranks of the soap-box orators and thence to the attenuated, but no less vocal, ranks of Britain's leading statesmen, is to etch the picture of perhaps the most remarkable career of our generation.

It is the picture of a boy who nearly became a farm laborer but who built up a new political party instead; of a boy who nearly starved in the city through which he was later to ride as the First Minister of the Crown; of a boy who educated himself to be an "intellectual" with a mind and culture that all men respect and admire, of a boy who became the most powerful tribune of the working people in our history.

What manner of man is this who speaks for over eight millions of the British electorate?

James Ramsay MacDonald was born sixty-three years ago, in



October 1866, at Lossiemouth, a fishing village on the shores of Moray Firth, where the boisterous winds and great tides of the North Sea have carved out a coastline as rugged as the people who have made it their home.

"Two voices are there; one is of the sea,  
One of the mountains: each a mighty voice;  
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice;  
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!"

At Lossiemouth Nature sounds a perpetual challenge to the adventurous. It is impossible to picture "the lover of soft paths" coming from such a spot. Inland there rises a spur of the mighty Grampians, snow-capped for half the year and lifting their heads to Heaven above the dark forests on their slopes, "like huge creatures squatting on some coast in the earliest of early days."<sup>1</sup> And facing the hills the sea, which is never quiet. Life in that region is hard, but it is also sane and wholesome; untouched by the forces of modern industrialism yet intensely, vitally alive.

Stern, even cruel at times, it would be hard to find a fitter cradle for a man ordained to know trial and tribulation and eventual triumph than that bleak region in the north of these Islands. Long before the time of James Ramsay MacDonald it had sent out sailors, sturdy pioneers, ministers of iron conscience and great kindness, scientists with a passion for truth. It was indeed the ideal birthplace of the babe whose life was to be spent in the maelstrom of politics and who was destined to need in later years every particle of that dour Scottish courage which is the common heritage of his race.

"Morayshire," writes one who knows it, "breeds a race in which mingle the blood of the Highlanders and that of the Norse Rovers from across the sea. No county in Scotland has a prouder heritage of historic association, of legend and heroic story."<sup>2</sup>

Young James Ramsay MacDonald was not only born in Lossie-

<sup>1</sup> "Scotland's Hills for me," by J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Forward*, September 9th, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *The Man of To-morrow*, by "Iconoclast," Leonard Parsons, 1924.

mouth; he was *of* it. His forbears had lived and died in the district for over two hundred years. His father was a Scottish farm laborer; his mother a remarkable woman, who, in the poverty into which he was born and in which he was reared, remained "undaunted by Fortune's frown."

Few men destined to great doings have begun with such heavy odds against them. MacDonald's home was a place of dire poverty. He had no influential relatives or friends. He had not even the blessing of robust health, for during his early years he had to nurse his strength, and on more than one occasion his tireless spirit has driven his body to the point of a breakdown.

His first home was the house of his grandmother, a two-roomed "but and ben," backing on to the railway and covered by a roof of thatch. That cradle of a future Prime Minister is still standing, and is pointed out to visitors with pride by the "locals" as a link with Lossiemouth's most famous son.

Not far away from this tiny cottage there stands to-day another house—the house which Ramsay MacDonald occupies during his rare visits to his birthplace when Parliament is not sitting. He built it for his mother a few years before the war, and it was there in 1911 that she died.

"Iconoclast" has portrayed that poor family at Lossiemouth:

"His grandmother's cottage was poor in the extreme, but she herself was a remarkable woman much respected by all her neighbors and still remembered for her mind and one-time beauty. She had seen better days, and, even in the poorest circumstances, retained the demeanor of a gentlewoman, a natural grace and dignity of manner.

"Her memory was a rich storehouse of ancient lore, of witches and fairies, of tales of second sight and high adventure. She knew all the old folk-songs. Spirit and imagination salted the poor fare of the boy's earliest home and made up for short commons in bread and meat. The talk of his grandmother was as good as a library; she brought him into contact with the inspiring men and deeds of the past; but as soon as the little lad could read he searched out all the books the place afforded." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *The Man of To-morrow*, pp. 62-63.



RAMSAY MacDONALD AT THE AGE OF 21—A PHOTOGRAPH OWNED BY MRS. FALCONER OF DARBY, PHILADELPHIA, AN AUNT OF THE FAMOUS STATESMAN



Since those early days MacDonald has paid frequent tribute to the help and encouragement which he derived from books. Whenever he is questioned about success and how to achieve it, his mind always turns to the part which the great books of literature must play in invigorating thought and providing a well-stored mind with stimulating ideas.

His own first contact with books was in a realm of tragedy. There came back to Lossiemouth a watchmaker who had migrated to England, and returned dying of consumption. The man had a small collection of books, which he gladly lent to the boy with an insatiable appetite for "learning things."

Through his kindness Ramsay MacDonald first read Samuel Smiles' *Life of a Scottish Naturalist*, Thomas Edwards' *Thomas Dick, the Thurso Baker*, and the works of Scott and Dickens.

Can you picture the scene in the poverty-stricken cottage—the consumptive watchmaker spending his last days in opening up to the eager lad who sat with him the wonders of literature? And the boy devouring book after book, marveling as great writers opened his eyes to an amazing, glorious, exciting world—perhaps implanting in his immature mind the seeds which later blossomed into a great love for all those who toil and suffer?

Among those who first influenced him was Hugh Miller, whose *Schools and Schoolmasters* was one of the first books he ever bought. Already he had the true Scot's passion for education, and perhaps also a lurking idea that when he grew up he, too, would be a schoolmaster. Certainly he dreamt that dream a little later on.

His interest in books was reflected in his prowess as a scholar at the local elementary school. There young MacDonald's remarkable ability was soon perceived, and there, despite his poverty, he was able to secure better education than would have been possible at that time for a lad so poor anywhere else but in Scotland.



Writing about his school days, Mr. MacDonald has given us an unforgettable picture of a Scottish Board School at that time:

"The work done in the school was of an old order now. It was a steady hard grind to get at the heart of things. We turned everything outside in, pulled everything to pieces in order to put it together again, analyzed, parsed, got firm hold of the roots, shivered English into fragments and fitted them together again like a Chinese puzzle, all by the help of Bain's Sixteenpenny Grammar (which the Dominie's pupils must remember in the same way as they do the Shorter Catechism), and wrestled with 'deductions.' Then every bolt in our intellectual being was tightened up. One of the Dominie's generalizations was: 'You must master; that is education; when you have mastered one thing you are well on the way to master all things.'"<sup>4</sup>

It must have been a wonderful training, for in young MacDonald it laid the foundation for a lucidity of thought and a mastery of our language such as are possessed by very few. Indeed, as any one who has read even the casual articles which from time to time he contributes to the Press, will have realized, when James Ramsay MacDonald became a politician, literature lost one who would inevitably have become a distinguished figure in the rôle of contemporary writers.

The school days of the poor were not unduly protracted, and at twelve years of age young MacDonald nearly went the usual way of the Lossiemouth lads, namely, to sea in one of the fishing boats which provided some of the local men with a scanty living. He actually did leave school and earned his first few shillings "howkin' tatties" (lifting potatoes) in the fields.

At the first crisis in his life, however, there was a man who detected that bigger things than potato lifting might be waiting for young MacDonald if only poverty could be overcome.

This was his Dominie. The old schoolmaster already looked upon MacDonald as his most promising pupil, and by making him a pupil-teacher and remitting his fees, he was able to start him on the road to a professorship or a pulpit.

<sup>4</sup> *Scottish Educational Journal*, September 26th, 1919.

He did even more. He encouraged young MacDonald's reading; he interested him in mathematics and the classics, and when his pupil-teacher showed a preference for science typical of a mind which has always hunted for the truth in all things, this very real friend still helped him as far as he could.

The friendship thus begun continued to his death, and to this day the Dominie's most distinguished pupil still wears the gold watch which his old master left to him.

That old Scots teacher, laboring in a remote village, and equipped with poor tools for the fashioning of a Prime Minister, must have been a remarkable man. How did he manage to succeed when so many men, even with the books and methods of to-day, would have failed? Let Ramsay MacDonald himself answer the question:

"What was his genius? Nothing recondite; nothing requiring unravelment by analytical minds. The simple kindness of the teacher is perhaps the most precious gift he can give his scholars. By that, he gathers them to his knee, as it were, and he puts his arm around them, and they never forget."<sup>5</sup>

That teacher's task could not have been easy. MacDonald has told how, in the summer, there were nests in the gorse and the sea was inviting, so inviting that sometimes the boys never reached the schoolhouse at all. Hidden behind the trees, they would watch him survey the empty playground, put to his lips the key with which he whistled for them, and turn back to his empty classroom. "It was the heart of the boy that admonished us next morning, and controlled the strokes that made our fingers tingle," MacDonald recalls, "and while he stood with the instrument of torture in his hand, instead of the lecture he gave us, he would have liked to say: 'I wish I had been with you, but you know that would not have done.'"

His pupils never forgot him, and in after summers when the memory of such scenes had been dimmed for many of them, they returned to visit him, among them Ramsay MacDonald.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

"We came mostly in summer, when, after he retired, we found him sitting in his chair in the garden, and it was good to look upon him. He had then laid his text-books and his golf clubs aside for ever, and was waiting. He shone in the sun. The cool breezes from the Firth blew his gray hair gently on his head; the far-off blue hills beyond the sea, the silent sleepy-looking whitewashed houses by the green, the lazy swish of the sea close at hand, made a world of peace and beauty for him. We talked of the past, of the big world outside into which he had never been, of our own ups and downs. He was happy and so were we. He felt possession in us, and we paid our dues with a glad heart."

It would be untrue to say that MacDonald was interested in nothing but learning and books. They occupied first place in his life, but they were only part of it. A natural gift of leadership, manifested even before he had reached his teens, and his abundant energy, made him the champion of the Lossiemouth youngsters in all their fights and all their games.

Among the latter was the feat of swinging—squirrel-like—round a circle of nineteen trees, from tree to tree. It was the test of fitness for the "Lossie loons" of that day, and when a boy had accomplished the feat he "passed to a niche amongst the heroes." The nineteen trees are gone now. The ground where they stood is bare. But to one of the boys at least who accomplished the grand achievement, those sentinels of forest power still live on in memory.

From the very first the young MacDonald endured poverty, but refused to accept it. Indeed, he rebelled against it with all his might. It has been said that the scientific bent of his mind, which caused him to prefer science to the classics, imbued him with the temper which takes nothing for granted, and insists on examining everything. That urge caused him to examine and condemn the existing economic system while still a pupil-teacher. From that moment he began to take an interest in local politics and to write for the local papers, or try to, upon political subjects.

It was about this time, too, that the youthful MacDonald underwent his political baptism when helping in a local election campaign. There was, of course, no Labor Party or organized

Labor candidates in those days, when MacDonald would have called himself a Radical for want of a better word. He canvassed for the Radical candidate, thereby supporting a "loser" for the first time, for when the poll was declared it was announced that the Tory had won the seat.

In his early experience of the political arena, Ramsay MacDonald did not make any speeches—that was to come later. But the part he played established his reputation as a "young man with ideas," and, it may be, fired his enthusiasm for politics and thus shaped his future destiny.

He was fortified in his growing belief that all was not as it should be by reading *Progress and Poverty*, by Henry George, a copy of which reached Lossiemouth soon after its publication.

If any one book can be said to have made the British Labor Party possible, it was that book. *Progress and Poverty* lit in countless minds the flame of an ideal, and in far-away Lossiemouth the book and the man first met each other, with results which were to change the course of history.

Then it was that MacDonald realized that the artist of to-day, if he is to do any good in the world, must take human life as his material, that until the world of men and women has been remolded the creative spirit cannot be freed for fruitful action.

He did not know it, but he was thinking along the same lines as William Morris, who was then playing so large a part in the propagation of Socialism in Britain.

As one of his friends has said: "Direct experience showed him the evils, the cruelty of poverty. His imagination—not the dead imagination of the statistician, but the living imagination of the artist—showed him the way out. Even as a young man he did not believe that there was any short cut to the Promised Land; there is only the long uphill road of continuous effort, a road of toil and drudgery, lit from time to time by gleams of light."

In the case of Ramsay MacDonald the road to the Promised Land was to be both long and difficult. At times hope was all but extinguished. But it seemed to him, as it has to countless eager young Scots, that the first step along that road led to London.



He had learnt all he could in Lossiemouth. If he was to be in a position to help others, to make his voice heard, he must first complete his scientific education by taking a degree.

Before following him along that first stretch of road ahead, there is one other influence of his early years that must be mentioned in order to complete the picture of the gaunt, eager young Scot who set out for London and fame. That was the church.

The Scottish kirk is in many ways more akin to the Welsh chapel than to the English church. It is closer to its people and vital to their lives in a manner almost unknown in the South.

The kirk which he attended at Lossiemouth imprinted its message upon his heart, and it is still there. However much his early views may have changed in other matters, in this one respect the MacDonald of to-day is the MacDonald of those early days, a man of religious convictions, earnestly held and deeply ingrained in his being.

There is striking evidence of this in the fact that one of the unfulfilled ambitions of his life is to write a biography of John Knox. The book was begun during a few free hours at Lossiemouth. One day he may have the leisure to complete it, and then the world will discover another MacDonald.

Thus equipped by church and schoolmaster, and intent upon dividing his life between science and politics, young Ramsay MacDonald, as handsome as Lochinvar, with dark flashing eyes and raven hair, set out on his quest.

He did not go straight to London, but journeyed first to Bristol, where he had got in touch with a social reformer who desired the services of a secretary.

It was at Bristol that the future Prime Minister addressed his first political meeting—an audience of three! It is not difficult to imagine what an ordeal even that strange English audience must have been to the Scottish village boy of eighteen.

But it was not home-sickness which drove young MacDonald back to Lossiemouth. It was the discovery that his employer's ideals on social reform did not fit in with his own. It was a blow to his hopes when he returned to Scotland, but return he did,



richer in experience if no richer in pocket, and more determined than ever to reach London itself—the world-center which all must conquer if they wish to make their voices heard in modern life.

A job of some sort was offered to him, probably as the result of answering an advertisement, and the "Lossie loon" set out once more on the road to fame.

He had only a shilling or two in his pocket, and not a single friend. But he had the promise of work to keep him while he was studying, and he had faith. That faith in himself he needed, for the work turned out to be a mare's-nest, and upon arrival in the city he was stranded.

Despite this fresh disaster he did not despair. Even in that darkest hour, not knowing where his next meal was coming from, and face to face with virtual starvation, he would not let his people in Lossiemouth know of his plight, lest they should be worried about him.

One thing he had decided. Whether he lived or died in this cold, lonely city of prosperous people, he would not go back for a second time. He must go forward—there was no other way. Or he would finish his short life alone and friendless in some garret of the great city as many who left Scotland with equally high hopes had done before him.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LEAN YEARS

**I**N no place in the whole world does the wanderer feel as lonely as in a great city where there is no one to call him friend.

Ramsay MacDonald has always been reticent, even with his closest friends, about those first days when, penniless, he wandered up and down the streets of the richest city on earth, seeking the employment which would enable him to live. He had adventured from Scotland as a modern Dick Whittington, and the world demanded the price which most poor boys have paid when, friendless and poor, they set out to follow their star to fortune.

MacDonald was different from a hundred others only because he was not seeking fortune—he merely wanted sufficient to enable him to live while he studied, in order to achieve his twin ambitions of a science mastership or a political career. He wanted to reform society, not to conquer it. The fact that the streets of London were supposed to be paved with gold did not interest him, except to arouse his disgust when he remembered those other streets, not a mile away from the heart of that city of millions, in which thousands of human beings lived out drab lives which were a constant struggle with starvation.

To the eighteen-year-old boy from Lossiemouth the slums of London were a challenge. They confirmed his first opinion that society must be changed; that what was wrong, to quote a phrase which he recalled later in life, was “a little too much luxury at one end of the social scale—a little too much poverty at the other.”

Other men—William Morris, H. M. Hyndman, Robert Blatchford, Keir Hardie, George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb—were thinking along the same lines. MacDonald had not met them



THE HOUSE AT ALLEN LANE, LOSSIMOUTH, SCOTLAND, WHERE BRITAIN'S PRIME  
MINISTER LIVED DURING HIS BOYHOOD YEARS



then. Before events brought all those pioneers together in the task of fashioning the British Labor Party, Ramsay MacDonald was destined to serve a long apprenticeship in the hard school of experience.

The job which he had come from Lossiemouth to fill having failed to materialize, MacDonald spent his first days in London in the usual manner of the out-of-work who has only a few shillings between himself and disaster. He trudged the streets in search of a job, answering advertisements, seeking those windows in which might be displayed a card saying "Junior wanted."

Apparently jobs were hard to find, even in those days. There was a time when nothing stood between him and sheer starvation.

At that point, not knowing where his next meal was coming from—his plan to study in the evenings and so obtain a science scholarship apparently unattainable—the future Prime Minister would have taken a job as an omnibus conductor had he not found temporary clerical work at the eleventh hour.

It was work which has been rightly called "the last refuge of the destitute"—addressing envelopes. A poorly paid task at the offices of the newly-formed Cyclists' Touring Club. MacDonald had never ridden a bicycle, and had no particular interest in the club; but he had a very great interest at that moment in the few shillings a week which would save him from walking back to Lossiemouth. He realized that if he went back a second time, it might well be for good.

So he felt thankful as he addressed interminable envelopes for the C.T.C. And here let me tell you the sequel to that humble task, which because it helped him to turn the corner, was a stepping-stone for all that was to come. In 1928 the Cyclists' Touring Club held their Jubilee Dinner, and the guest of honor was the Right Honorable J. Ramsay MacDonald, P.C., M.P. In his speech to the assembled members of the now veteran and flourishing organization, he surprised many of his audience by recalling his first connection with the club.

A few weeks of addressing envelopes and he secured his second situation in London. This was the post of invoice clerk in the



warehouse of Cooper, Box & Co., in the city, at 12s. 6d. per week. The wage left no money over for midday meals in the city, so he spent the lunch hours reading in the Guildhall Library.

Often his "lunch" consisted of a glass of water. It was starvation diet—the diet which self-made men often recall with an inverted pride but which few of them would care to repeat.

"Those tremulous days, were they as happy as they seem seen through the smoke of this banqueting hall? If the smoke were to clear away too much, which of us would not be the first to shiver?"<sup>1</sup>

Those words were spoken by Sir James Barrie, referring to his own early days in London as a penniless scribe, but he spoke for all those who have known loneliness and hunger and looked into the cold unsympathetic face which London assumes to greet those who dare to adventure in her streets.

Any man who has known real poverty and loneliness in youth will realize how often MacDonald must have longed to be back in Lossiemouth and to hear his native brogue again. But his dreams spurred him on. And if he had to starve his body he neglected no opportunity of stocking his mind with the knowledge he had left his home to gain. His evenings were spent studying at the Birkbeck Institute, where he took a correspondence course, and in reading all the scientific books he could beg or borrow.

His appetite for knowledge brought him into contact with an analytical chemist who, impressed by his industry and sincerity, allowed him the use of his own laboratory.

There the young Scot carried out some experiments on coal analysis, which resulted in further work of the same sort, enabling him to leave the city warehouse for more attractive and interesting duties.

To work and to study at the same time frequently meant going to bed at two or three in the morning and getting up at six or seven for another day's work. No constitution could long stand such a strain, and Nature stepped in to mar his hopes just when a Queen's scholarship at South Kensington seemed within his

<sup>1</sup> Speech at Newspaper Press Fund Dinner, April 23rd, 1929.

grasp. His health broke down, and he was prevented from doing any work for weeks.

At the time this seemed a cruel stroke of fate. He could not take the examination. A scientific career had to be abandoned.

There is a strange irony in the fact that to-day Mr. MacDonald is a Life Governor of University College and also a member of the Council of the Birkbeck College, to which, over forty years ago, he used to hurry when his work as an invoice clerk was over for the day.

In November 1887 came his baptism of political fire in London. On the 13th of that month a party of Socialists and workers tried to hold a meeting in Trafalgar Square, in defiance of a proclamation prohibiting processions or meetings in, or near, that place.

There was bad fighting between the police and demonstrators that afternoon, and many were injured. Among those who risked arrest in the attempt to hold the meeting was the future leader of the Labor Party.

Referring to the incident later, MacDonald has written: "These troubles arose in connection with an agitation of the unemployed. Trade was very bad and men out of employment were being told for the first time in their lives that 'they ought not to starve in private.' They were told to come out in their rags, and they came, the just with the unjust, and, as usual, those who looked on saw only the unjust."

Cunninghame Graham and John Burns were arrested for leading processions within the prohibited area, and the disorder continued until troops were drafted to the scene, and a magistrate read the Riot Act.

One wonders what the young Scot thought of it all.

At this critical point MacDonald was brought into contact with Mr. Thomas Lough, then the Liberal candidate for West Islington. Mr. Lough was looking for a private secretary, and when he discovered that this keen young man had studied economics, helped in an election campaign back in Scotland, could write, and had ideas about the government of his country, he

engaged MacDonald at a salary of £75 per annum, rising to £100.

"Now I have attained fortune," wrote MacDonald after that event. It was not quite that, but his career was beginning to shape itself. From 1888 to 1891 he passed four happy years in association with "Tommy" Lough, and although that worthy Radical did not capture his young secretary for Liberalism, and MacDonald's efforts did not win for him the West Islington seat ("he got in when I left him," said Mr. MacDonald later), the experience greatly enlarged his knowledge of the all-important practical side of politics.

Within a year of his arrival in London he had joined the Social Democratic Federation, the pioneer Socialist organization founded by the late H. M. Hyndman. While associated with Mr. Lough he joined the Fabian Society, of which he was an executive member for several years.

The latter body at that time believed that Socialism and Labor ideas could best be spread by working within the Liberal Party rather than by forming a separate political organization. When Keir Hardie first stood as parliamentary candidate for Mid-Lanark, in 1888, he fought as a "Labor" candidate, but on the Liberal program, and he appealed for Liberal support.

As a Scottish Home Ruler, Ramsay MacDonald supported Keir Hardie's candidature. He was then acting as secretary to the London committee of the Scottish Home Rule Association, and in that capacity he wrote a letter from his lodgings in Kentish Town sending the good wishes of his committee to Hardie.

That was the first communication to pass between the two men who may be said to have brought the Labor Party into being.

Working as secretary to a Liberal candidate, associated with at least one society which still believed it possible to attain the Socialist Commonwealth by cooperating with Liberalism, it is hardly surprising that for a time MacDonald himself held the same ideas.

It was not until 1893, when the Independent Labor Party was founded and began its ceaseless advocacy of separate Socialist

and Labor representation in the House of Commons, that he allowed his inner desire and belief in a free national Labor Party full rein.

From that time he abandoned Liberalism entirely, and became the most powerful advocate of a militant Socialist policy in the country.

## CHAPTER III

### THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

**R**AMSAY MACDONALD had now reached the parting of the ways. On one hand the river of working-class political thought flowed back towards Liberalism and the widespread belief that that creed held within itself the seed of a happy and prosperous Britain; on the other towards the new philosophy of Socialism—new only in its growth, for the dream of a Socialist State dated back to Lassalle, Marx, Robert Owen, and the Communist Manifesto published in 1847. Socialism had been a growing force for many years before the “Lossie loon” made his pilgrimage from Morayshire to London, and the creed captured the mind which was destined to transform it from an ideal into a practical policy, from the realm of dreams into the stuff of which votes are made.

It would probably be true to say that MacDonald had been a Socialist from the time when he read George’s *Progress and Poverty* at Lossiemouth. “It familiarized people with the idea of common use of property, of common creation of values, of common claims to share in aggregate wealth,” he has written. “It led them to discuss the problem of poverty, not as the result of personal shortcoming, but as an aspect of a certain form of social organization.”

Henry George’s book, indeed, had a more dramatic effect upon British political thought than any work published during the last century. It dominated the minds of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party just as it galvanized into action those who had been groping towards a Socialist Commonwealth. It even achieved the undoubted feat of making Karl Marx a popular author, for chapters of *Das Kapital* were published and read as sequels to *Progress and Poverty*.



To understand the ideas which were germinating in the mind of the young Scot, therefore, we must turn aside for a moment in order to study the early history and aims of the movement to which he was destined to dedicate his life.

The apostle of the movement was Count de Saint-Simon, that amazing scion of a noble French family who spent his time while a British prisoner of war in Jamaica in speculating whether a canal could be cut through Central America. In 1817, when France was still exhausted from the effects of the Napoleonic wars, he published his first volume on the organization of society, entitled *l'Industrie*, with the sub-title: *Political, Moral, and Philosophical Discussions in the Interest of all Free Men, and of Useful and Independent Work*.

Saint-Simon's creed may be summarized in the phrase: "Men ought to conduct themselves as brothers one to another." His aim was to elevate moral thought rather than to create any new school of political ideas.

"Saint-Simon," Ramsay MacDonald has written,<sup>1</sup> "was not so much a Socialist as an originator of Socialist thought. He suggested systematic thinking rather than presented it himself. He held up an ideal of society which men approved; he proposed to create it by ways which men rejected, but in rejecting them they built up Socialism. Above all, he taught men that the control of a system of property owning was more vital to a people than the control of a legislative machine."

The industrial conditions in France during the early years of the last century, with a widening gap between the propertied minority and the propertyless majority, favored the rapid development of the democratic movement. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the years following 1830 others arose to carry forward the forging of a Socialist creed from the point where Saint-Simon had left it at his death in 1825.

Charles Fourier, Louis Blanc and Proudhon were all leaders of early Socialist thought in France during this period of incubation. Ramsay MacDonald holds the view that if any one is entitled to

<sup>1</sup> *Socialism*, T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1907.

be called the father of modern Socialism, Louis Blanc has claims as good as any rival.

"Capital and the large workshop were accepted by him as necessary, but he argued that the State, and not the private individual, should be the capitalist—the banker of the poor.' He therefore devised his scheme of 'social workshops' which were to be subsidized by the State, and were gradually to take the place of individually owned workshops which competed with each other."

Blanc was no visionary, and to him the world owes one of the first practical experiments in Socialism. As a member of the Provisional Government in 1848, he actually opened some of the social workshops which he advocated. "Although in time—one lasted for about thirty years—they were all closed," states Mr. MacDonald, "their large measure of success and their capacity to struggle against most adverse circumstances showed the practicability of the scheme."<sup>2</sup>

About that initial experiment in State ownership it is only necessary to point out that a study of the actual conditions in which the experiment was made is necessary before any reasoned judgment can be given upon the measure of success achieved.

The pioneer of Socialist thought in our own country is generally considered to be Robert Owen, but for many years before this "eccentric philanthropist" began his social experiments, men had been groping their way towards a new system of production, exchange and the distribution of wealth.

Godwin was one of the thinkers whose theories attracted attention on this side of the Channel in the years following the French Revolution. "He went to the root of things," says Ramsay MacDonald. According to Godwin: "English capitalism, unbridled by legislation, and unrestrained by any influence but the impetus of its own immediate requirements, had begun to make those inroads upon human felicity which mark the times when the industrial Revolution was re-creating industrial processes and

<sup>2</sup> *Socialism*, 1907, p. 28.

changing our social relationships. From such conditions Socialism was born."

Others, like Dr. Ogilvy, an Aberdeen professor, preached that human wretchedness was caused by the private ownership of land, a point of view with which Godwin fully agreed. There was therefore a definite link between these early Socialist thinkers and Henry George and the modern Labor Party.

Upon one fact all the early pioneers of British Socialist thought were agreed—that vice and poverty were the products of so-called Civilization.

"Civilization," wrote Paine in his *Agrarian Justice*—quoted by Ramsay MacDonald in one of his early books—"has operated two ways, to make one part of society more affluent, and the other part more wretched, than could have been the lot of either in a natural state."

The earliest attempt to put any form of Socialism into practise in Britain was that made by Robert Owen, whose experiments, although abortive, carried political thought a long step forward during the first years of the nineteenth century.

Owen was a remarkable man, so remarkable that the story of his achievements has forced itself upon British political thought again and again during the century which has passed since he first expounded the then revolutionary creed that it was good business as well as good morality to treat workers as human beings and not as slaves.

Because the life of Robert Owen unquestionably influenced the career of MacDonald, a reference must be made here to the famous New Lanark experiment.

Robert Owen evidently had a "good head for business," for starting as a child of ten in a draper's shop, by his nineteenth birthday he was the manager of a cotton mill at Manchester.

In 1800, having married the daughter of the proprietor of the New Lanark cotton mills on the middle reaches of the Clyde, he induced his partners to purchase the mills, and went North to look after the new business.

"There were 2000 employees, one-fourth being children from the workhouses of Glasgow, Edinburgh, and the neighborhood," writes Mr. MacDonald,<sup>3</sup> "and the whole community, despite some kindly philanthropy on the part of the previous owner, was a sink of vicious habits and brutal conditions. It was an ordinary specimen of the first human productions of Capitalism.

"In this degradation the roots of Owenism embedded themselves, and from these roots sprang many plants of refreshment and healing. He was the first to show that humane treatment of labor produced those material profits with which business economy of the day alone concerned itself; he was the first to argue that Society should use its legislative powers as a means of self-protection against Capitalism blinded by the profits of to-day to the resulting costs of to-morrow, and that when Society did so, strange as it might appear to a class living and thinking in a deep rut of material interests, the Capitalism so curbed would have benefits conferred upon it.

"Thus far, it was Owen the philanthropist who was at work discovering that, apart from its own sanctions, philanthropy was business, and that humane consideration in industry so concerned the State that it should be made the motive for protective legislation. These were movements which could be received hospitably by Capitalism, for though they were opposed to certain of its ideas and operations, Owen was demonstrating that these forms of waste were not only not essential but were, as a matter of fact, inefficient and, therefore, unprofitable to industry. They were, in consequence, not the beginnings of movements towards a higher order than Capitalism, though they so developed, but movements for reform within Capitalism itself—movements to make Capitalism wise—movements to recruit as allies to the creeds of political economy, ethics and humanity, which at the time had been ruled out as aliens when the science of wealth in production and distribution was under consideration."

I would refer those who wish to study Owenism at length to

<sup>3</sup> *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald. Cassell and Co.



the chapter entitled "Socialism: Its Organisation and Idea," in Mr. MacDonald's book from which the above passages are taken. The influence of this remarkable man upon Socialist thought is acknowledged by Mr. MacDonald in these words:

"No better definition of Socialism can be given in general terms than that it aims at the organization of the material economic forces of Society and their control by the human forces: no better criticism of Capitalism can be given than that it aims at the organization of the human forces of Society and their control by the economic and material forces. In 1817, Owen defined the goal and the idea."

In 1824 came the next step, when William Thompson published his *Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth*. Thompson contended that wealth is the creation of labor and put forward the thesis that under capitalist conditions, wages are governed by subsistence needs—the entire surplus of value going to the landlord and the capitalist. "He grants that a payment should be made for the use of these two," comments MacDonald, "but that it should not exceed the income of the best-paid workman." <sup>4</sup> Of Thompson, Professor Foxwell has said that "he was the first writer to elevate the question of the just distribution of wealth to the supreme position it has since held in English political economy." Ramsay MacDonald adds that Thompson "certainly laid the unshakable foundation of Socialist economic criticism and everything that has since been written on the subject, consciously or unconsciously, begins with Thompson."

When he turned to practical measures, Thompson was less effective and could only suggest an extension of the Owenite communities in which Socialism was being practised. Owenism failed as a political creed, but the preaching of Robert Owen and William Thompson had concrete results. If the early Socialists were impotent to bring the new world which these pioneers envisaged into being, the first Liberal epoch made use of the theories they had enunciated, particularly those defining the right of the State to legislate protective measures in industry, to curb some of the

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.



worst excesses of the industrial revolution. Thus "revolutionary broodings" ceased for a decade, while the vast majority of the nation looked to the new Liberalism, rather than to an almost forgotten Socialism, for those reforms which enlightened people wished to see.

"Parallel with this political drift," Mr. MacDonald has said, "was one of humanism and sentiment. Christian Socialism," he adds in a burst of rhetoric, "raised its emphatic protest against the crucifixion of humanity on many a factory-town Calvary; the literary and artistic humanists, of whom Carlyle and Ruskin were the chief, proclaimed that there is no wealth except the life which commercialism was sacrificing."<sup>5</sup>

The violent efforts of the Chartists all but destroyed Socialism as a separate movement in England. And it did not emerge from this neglect, in Britain at all events, until the rise of Trade Unionism and Cooperation, and the discontent of the Liberal-Laborists following such policies as the bombardment of Alexandria and the coercion of the Irish nation, gave it fresh strength and a renewed impetus. During that period of neglect, Socialism abroad was strengthened by the rise of three German propagandists in its cause, whose names will for ever be associated with the movement—Lassalle, Marx, and Engels.

Of the three Karl Marx played the most important part. When this German Jew came to London, in 1849, Socialism was still in a state which may be likened to a patchwork quilt—an ill-digested collection of theories propounded by well-meaning reformers who had correctly diagnosed the disease, according to their lights, but who awaited a constructive remedy for the evils they wished to sweep away.

Marx brought a scientific intellect to bear upon the problems of society. He was the first great advocate of internationalism, and before his death he succeeded in defining both disease and cure with scientific precision.

It may be true, as Mr. MacDonald has declared, that "to-day,

<sup>5</sup> *Socialism*, 1907, p. 40.

Marx is known over as wide a world as even Christ or Mohammed," and that he holds a position equal to any one of the few teachers who have founded religious movements. But certainly the reason for whatever degree of influence, as distinguished from lip-service, Marx wields in the comity of nations to-day is not to be found in the lucidity of the Socialist creed as he expounded it.

His writings may be inspired, as Socialist leaders have told me; but they are largely unread except by those who for years kept up a bitter war of sects, each of which placed a different construction upon the meaning of his teaching.

Marx is akin to Lenin in that from this one man's brain there emerged a complete and finished philosophy which his supporters declared contained all the wisdom necessary for the founding of the Socialist Commonwealth. Lenin, however, was more successful than Karl Marx in that the methods by which he sought to win all Europe for the Communist creed are easily understandable—if not so easily carried into the realm of achievement—whereas *Das Kapital*, which sets forth Marx's scientific explanation of how Capitalism exploits the workers, contains a definition of value and method which three massive and highly involved volumes could not satisfactorily elucidate.

"The validity of his economic theories is more than doubtful," Mr. MacDonald has admitted,<sup>6</sup> "his historical philosophy is in the same position."

What, then, is the secret of the power which this German Jew undoubtedly still exercises upon Socialist thought nearly fifty years after his death?

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald attempts to supply the answer when he says: "He (Marx) was the first to give the working classes a hope that, by adopting a certain policy, they would attain to freedom; the policy which he put before them was one which enlivened their spirit, appealed to their intelligences, and set the lines of their battle in just such a way as to inspire them with the

<sup>6</sup> *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, p. 48.

greatest possible fighting zeal, both on account of the rich fruits of the victory that was to be gained and of the steely antagonism against the enemy which it put in their hearts.”<sup>7</sup>

What was this new teaching which brought world fame to the little alien who grew yellow and wrinkled poring over books in the British Museum Reading Room (surely the most prosaic setting for the plotting of a world revolution ever selected)?

The cornerstone of Marx’s theory, as expounded in *Das Kapital*, is that labor is the creator of all wealth, but that under Capitalism labor is not paid by the value it produces, but by the price of labor power as a commodity on the market. This price, according to Karl Marx, is fixed by the economic laws under which we live at a point which just secures an adequate supply of labor for industry. This he called the “Iron Law of Wages.” Thus Capitalism possesses itself of the surplus product of the industry of the many; the rich become richer and more able to exploit the poor, and labor poorer and less able to defend itself against exploitation.

Side by side with this theory, Marx put forward another, which he called “economic determinism.”

“Marx found,” says Mr. MacDonald, “as many others who are far from holding Socialist conclusions have also done, that all historical phenomena, whatever their superficial characteristics, must be ultimately assigned to economic causes. Thus, with an economic foundation of surplus value, Marx explains the historical as well as the economic evolution of the existing system. The private ownership of capital and the interests of the class that holds it have determined the creation and evolution of States. The origin of war is Capitalism; the movements of religion, like our Reformation, are economic; to this power the life of the world and of the people thereon are in bondage; the slavery of the wage worker is different in kind but not in nature to that of the chattel.”<sup>8</sup>

Thus Karl Marx stated the case for an international movement

<sup>7</sup> *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, p. 48.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

which would sweep away the barriers erected by property and allow the peoples of the world to pool their common interests.

This all-embracing internationalism, and belief that the peoples of Britain, Japan, and China are all facing the same root economic problems and abuses, are expounded in the thrilling phrases of a clarion call to action in the *Communist Manifesto*, published in 1847.

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," declares Marx. "At present the world is in the midst of a struggle with the bourgeoisie, which has clambered to power over the heads of the feudal aristocracy. To retain that power, it has to exploit every market in the world and constantly to revolutionize productive industry.

"Its instrument is the organization of capital, its method of warfare free competition. It has no sentiment, no culture,"—I quote now from a summary written by Mr. MacDonald—"it brings man face to face with the hard material facts of the struggle for life. But the victory of the bourgeoisie proceeds alongside the growing power of the proletariat. The small capitalist is crushed out and joins the working class; the working class herded into towns becomes conscious of its mass and power, and organizes itself; political and industrial collisions take place which become more and more bare class conflicts; a time is reached when part of the bourgeoisie, moved by intellectual methods, go over from their own class to that of the proletariat; and finally, to this new class movement, becoming conscious of itself and its meaning, victory is inevitable. Being the whole nation, its triumph will not be a class triumph, however. It is the last of the class struggles."<sup>9</sup>

The *Manifesto* goes on to define a program including the abolition of private property in land, a progressive income-tax, certain changes in property-holding, such as the concentration of credit in the State, nationalization of the means of transport, further extensions of State activity in production and distribution, the making of work compulsory upon all, an organization of industry

<sup>9</sup> *Socialism*, 1907, pp. 44-45.



which will fuse town and country into an industrial unit, free education, and the abolition of child labor.

There are further sections too involved to be usefully summarized and for which the interested reader should refer to the full text, and the *Manifesto* closes with a flight of rhetoric which has since been inscribed upon ten thousand thousand banners of militant Socialism: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all countries, unite!"

To avoid any confusion in the reader's mind it must be explained that at the time when this *Manifesto* was given to the world, what we know to-day as Socialism was generally referred to as Communism. Karl Marx was therefore attempting to forecast the evolution of Socialism towards world power. That being so, and considering his confident prediction of class conflicts, how can any one honestly uphold Marxism while in the next breath accepting the theory of Parliamentary evolution as opposed not only to revolution but also to direct action in any form?

It is true that the ballot-box and the doctrines of Marx do not mix very well together. It is equally true, however, that most of those who cheer the name of Marx the loudest do so not because of either complete comprehension of or agreement with his theories, but because to be pro-Marx is part of the ritual of orthodox Socialism or to pay tribute to "the vision and understanding which he contributed to make a vague inspiration into a virile and definite movement."<sup>10</sup>

"He saw the truth with power,"<sup>11</sup> is how Mr. MacDonald sums up the most interesting figure in the world of Socialism, "and that remains alive when explanations of it fail and only gather the dust of beliefs that have been outlived. Marx was greater and more abiding than Marxism. This he himself saw when he is said to have exclaimed one day, deafened by the squabble of disciples and would-be disciples: 'Thank God, I am no Marxist.' It is not Marxism that survives but Marx."

British Socialist thought was still dominated by the theories of

<sup>10</sup> *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



the *Communist Manifesto* when, in 1881, there appeared the American Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*.

Henry George's book came at a moment when the problems of poverty and industry were challenging attention again after a period of political quiescence. Its publication was, indeed, more than the starting-point of MacDonald's pilgrimage, it marked the dawn of a new era in the British Socialist movement, which, growing in impetus as the years passed, to this very day shows no certain signs of having reached its zenith.

Three years later, in 1884, about the very time that MacDonald was setting out for London, a Socialist organization was founded by H. M. Hyndman under the title of the Social Democratic Federation. It was the forerunner of several other organizations with more or less similar aims. In the same year the Fabian Society was founded for the avowed purpose of directing the growing movement, and began its strangely detached crusade in favor of a Socialist state—an intellectual crusade carried out by methods verging on the autocratic. And about this time Christian Socialism began another period of progress which, says Mr. MacDonald, "gave life to the Guild of St. Matthew, which had been started in 1876 as a democratic Church Society."

This fresh spasm of activity might have died down, like other periods of seeming progress between the days of Robert Owen and those of the Social Democratic Federation, but for one important change in contemporary political thought. The communities which voluntarily embraced Owenism at the beginning of the century had applied Socialism to their daily lives in the only way open to them in a still despotic State. But by the end of the century the coming of a democratic franchise had created a new weapon, and through the power of that weapon new machinery by which Socialism could be put into operation. Instead of thinking in terms of isolated communities as the Owenites had been forced to do, the Socialists whose work and words influenced the youthful MacDonald upon his arrival in London were already planning to achieve the power to carry out their theories by the support of the whole electorate, thus securing power in the local

and national legislative bodies and controlling them, and through them the means of production and distribution. The parochial stage of Socialism was definitely over and the period of national aspirations had dawned.

Still, the Socialist machinery was not yet ready for the beginning of the great march to power. False starts were made—it would have been astounding if they had not.

“The foreign outlook, phrases and criticisms of the Social Democratic Federation,” says Mr. MacDonald, who was a member of that body during the months while Socialism was mobilizing its forces, “never quite fitted themselves into British conditions; whilst the Fabian Society, much more successful in adapting Socialism to British Evolution, never succeeded in applying it to the movements of contemporary politics, and never faced the problem of how to organize the masses so that they might be available for the advancement of Socialist legislation.”<sup>12</sup>

Up to that hour, no successful attempt had been made to link these Socialist bodies with the great Trade Union movement. Yet it was clear that this was the first step towards political power, for while cooperation with the Unions for political purposes meant the accession of the solid strength of the organized working-class movement to Socialism, the political movement in return offered a means of overcoming the real weakness of the Trade Unions. This was the system of organizing the workers into “watertight compartments,” and the impotence of an annual Congress which could only pass resolutions and “lay them at the feet of Cabinet Ministers.”

Ramsay MacDonald early laid the movement under a debt of gratitude for the manner in which his keen intellect saw the opportunity and pressed the issue to a conclusion by concentrating upon the task of winning over the Trade Unions, and upon that sure foundation, in alliance with other groups, building up the new party based upon beliefs shared by all in common.

There were other events which had a bearing upon the last decisive step. The rise of local Labor Parties in cities like Brad-

<sup>12</sup> *Socialism*, 1907, p. 50.

ford and Manchester. The London Dock strike and the so-called "new Unionism" which followed. The challenge issued during the Trade Union Congress of 1892 by a tiny handful to the domination of that body by Liberal officials—all these things came to pass before the last decisive step could be taken.

It could not be long delayed—this new political party. Labor, so far as it was politically conscious, had reached an impasse. It demanded sweeping changes, and knew that it would never get them from either of the two great parties which shared the fruits of office and the responsibility of government. On the other hand, none of the existing Socialist organizations seemed able to forge the last vital link which would band together workers and thinkers into a practical alliance.

At this critical juncture for Socialism there arose a new leader who was destined to give direction and driving force to the movement; to lead it away from Continental ways of thought and phraseology, and to make it for the first time a distinctively British development, determined by British conditions and working with methods suited to this country. The name of this Luther of British Socialism was Keir Hardie.

Hardie was one of the first working men to sit in the House of Commons, and the first man to win an election as a completely independent Labor representative, owing allegiance to neither Tory nor Liberal, but opposing both. During the Trade Union Congress which met at Glasgow, in 1892, a private conference was held of those who believed that ways and means must be found of gaining for Socialism the confidence and cooperation of the organized workers.

To achieve this end, it was decided, a new body was needed. And it was those forming what may be called the new school of Socialists who decided to take the issue in hand without delay. The following year this little band met again, at Bradford, and at that meeting was born the Independent Labor Party.

Hard things have been said about the Independent Labor Party during recent years. Some of those who were its earliest members and staunchest supporters, such as Philip Snowden, have signal-

ized their opinion of its latter-day activities by resigning their membership. MacDonald himself, for so long the "white-headed boy" of the Independent Labor Party, no longer goes to the Annual Conference of the Labor Party as an Independent Labor Party delegate, and his leadership of the Parliamentary body has been bitterly criticized at times by his former associates. The most recent example of this divergence of aim between the two organizations was the Maxton-Cook manifesto issued in 1928 and aimed at forcing a bolder policy upon the Labor Party executive.

It must be admitted by all who have any knowledge of present-day Socialism that an Independent Labor Party is an anachronism. The Independent Labor Party is now a propaganda society, pure and simple, and much of its preaching is aimed at embarrassing the political leaders in whose hands to-day rests the direction of the British movement. In justice, however, it must be stated that the Independent Labor Party, under Keir Hardie, and during the early days of Ramsay MacDonald's active membership, performed a most valuable service to the cause by teaching Socialist organizations in this country to discard the last shreds of foreign influence, and by developing a policy and propaganda which were distinctively British and suited to the temperament of our people. The "inevitability of gradualness"—Sidney Webb's famous phrase—really dates from the moment when the Independent Labor Party was inaugurated on a basis of evolution instead of revolution.

The formation of the I.L.P. marked the beginning of the third stage in the evolution of Socialism. The first was Owenism; the second Marxism; the new phase had the advantage of an immediate program which all could understand. "Let the workers go to Parliament—let them take into their own hands the task of securing the fruits of toil for the toilers."

Thus the story of British Socialism is carried up to the day when MacDonald finally turned his back upon all thoughts of cooperation with Liberalism, and devoted all his energies to the task of assisting in the creation of a separate party, pledged to fight for a Socialist Commonwealth.



## CHAPTER IV

MARGARET GLADSTONE

WHEN 1893 dawned MacDonald was no longer friendless.

Through his work as secretary to Mr. Lough he had met many Londoners; while his membership of the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation had enabled him to establish contact with the band of pioneers who, like himself, were feeling their way along the road towards the point at which Socialism could openly challenge the older and more orthodox political creeds.

The Socialist movement in Britain has never lacked brilliant advocates, and the Fabian debates and frequent conferences would have provided a magnificent political education for any young man much less enthusiastic than was MacDonald. He revealed at this time a typically Scottish trait—a love of studying great minds as well as listening to their words. Yet it is probably true to say that the predominant factor in the development of his ideas was his insatiable appetite for reading.

For a time he was attracted by the New Fellowship, with which Professor Thomas Davidson was associated, but the attraction was not lasting. Already MacDonald was tiring of abstract ideals and warming only to those bodies with aims that were severely practical and promised results which all could see. In “the peaceful perfection of individual character” which the New Fellowship preached he could not find the answer to his hopes.

As often happens when youth and ideas and enthusiasm meet, it was not long before the need for some form of expression, other than meetings and debates, made itself felt.

As the political secretary of a prominent London Liberal he was in touch with some of the newspapers. He began to sell arti-



cles. His writing thus provided a useful avenue by which to disseminate his ideas and earn an income. The result was that when, in 1891, he ended his work with Mr. Lough, he turned to his pen for a living and branched out upon a journalistic career by joining the staff of the *Weekly Dispatch*.

Later, he was for a time with the *Echo*, the London evening paper founded by Passmore Edwards, and now long dead. For both the *Echo* and the *Daily Chronicle* he wrote regularly for a considerable period, during which he also did much free-lance writing.

As I have said, Ramsay MacDonald was intended by Providence to be a writer. His beautiful prose style and amazing lucidity of expression were born in him. One wonders now whether the papers in which his work appeared appreciated it at its true worth. Probably their editors, if any survive, would declare that they detected the spark of genius even then and encouraged it. Perhaps some of those with whom he was in contact did encourage him, but it was the man's indomitable will, his unquenchable energy, that made his career possible despite drawbacks, disappointments, poverty and ill-health.

MacDonald has recalled memories of this time when talking to an audience of journalists at the London Press Club.

"My recollection of editors goes back to the days of Fox-Bourne, A. E. Fletcher and William Clark," he said. "Those were great days, days of hard work, of very heavy study, and of late and early hours. The money was very small, but the satisfaction of spending it was very great. I very often recall those old days with profound satisfaction. No later experience has given me more pleasure and pride than the appearance of my first leading article in a London newspaper."

For a brief period during this journalistic interlude, he edited the *Labour Leader* for the Independent Labor Party, and he wrote many articles for the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

"From the 'M's' onward he is represented there," says the author of *The Man of To-morrow*, "a fact which may demonstrate simply and clearly enough how complete and scholarly an

education the barefooted boy of Lossiemouth had by then succeeded in acquiring for himself."

In addition to these journalistic activities, he was working prodigiously for the various Socialist bodies to which he belonged. He had already established himself as one of the moving spirits of the Independent Labor Party, formed under the inspiration and guidance of Keir Hardie. The object of this first politically conscious and independent band of Laborites was, in MacDonald's own words: "Socialism; its method was to unite all the forces owning Socialism as their goal and inspiration. It rejected abstractions and dogmas, and it appealed directly to the everyday experience of Labor."

The immediate task of the new political party was to awaken the organized workers to the need for political action. Between 1895 and 1899 a continuous propaganda was carried on, both within the Trade Unions and outside, which bore fruit, in 1900, in the formation of the Labor Representation Committee, the forerunner of the modern Labor Party.

Big events, however, were to happen in MacDonald's career before the wisdom of his ceaseless demand for Labor's own representatives in the House of Commons was to be admitted and the path cleared for the coming of the Labor Party to Westminster.

Side by side with his work for the I.L.P. and his interest in the Fabians, MacDonald was devoting his energies to the assistance of his namesake, James MacDonald, the secretary of the London Trades Council.

This Council then represented some 200 societies and nearly 100 trades. It was the biggest and most representative body of workers existing in the capital. Moreover, it was one of the first organizations to work for independent Labor candidates, free from any connection with the Liberal Party.

MacDonald's intimate contact with the actual workers has always been one of his greatest sources of strength. He has the power of instinctively visualizing what any given factor in life means to the humblest member of his party. Like Lincoln, he comes of the people, and he is still "of the people." And it is

noteworthy that his greatest exertions in the 'nineties were made for the Independent Labor Party and the London Trades Council, rather than for the Fabians, whose creed of Collectivism was too cold, savoring too much of Blue books and statistics rather than humanity, for him to be completely happy. "Humanity before wealth, power or pride" might have been his motto in the days preceding the formation of the Labor Party.

Holding these views, he was quick to realize that the first practical step forward for Socialism in London, and indeed in Britain, was to win over the Trades Council, and then the Trade Union Congress, from their old ideas of standing aloof from politics, and to gain their support for the independent party whose fighting banner Keir Hardie had unfurled at Bradford in 1893.

Until that much had been achieved the Independent Labor Party was a party of leaders without any compact body of voters to back them up. The working classes were stirring, discontented, anxious for better things. But until the Trade Union leaders undertook the task of marshaling them to the ballot-box in support of Labor candidates there would be little chance of making any impression on the solid phalanx of Tories and Liberals at Westminster, or carrying the message of Labor to the country in a voice which all would understand heralded the opening of a new chapter in parliamentary government.

Keir Hardie had been returned to Parliament as member for West Ham in 1893, the year that the I.L.P. had been formed. At the election which took place two years later twenty-eight I.L.P. candidates stood, among them Ramsay MacDonald, who made his first attempt to enter the House of Commons as Labor candidate for Southampton.

The Election Address which he issued as his opening shot in that contest sheds an interesting light on the views of Ramsay MacDonald at the age of twenty-nine, when he stood at the very beginning of his political career.

"The Principles and Program upon which I shall ask your opinion on the day of the election can be briefly stated," he wrote. "I ceased to trust in the Liberal Party when I was con-



MRS. MARGARET MacDONALD WITH HER ELDEST SON, ALASTAIR





vinced that they were not prepared to go on and courageously face the bread-and-butter problems of the time—the problems of poverty, stunted lives, and pauper-and-criminal-making conditions of labor. Neither Tories nor Liberals have a Labor policy as we understand it. Neither of them can answer why house rents are going up in Southampton; why the struggling shop-keeper and wage earner are reaping so little benefit from the increasing size of the town; why the unemployed difficulty is becoming more pressing; what to do with the machinery which is being introduced all round, and which should make labor easier, but is, in reality, now beginning to take the place of labor.

“To our minds,” MacDonald continued, “these questions admit of an easy answer. The monopolist owns the land and houses of Southampton, and keeps piling up a rent which he has never justly earned.

*“I am, therefore, in favor of Land Nationalization; and as a step to that end would begin at once by taxing, for local purposes, those extra values which your enterprise and the advantages of your natural position have created.*

“I am also in favor of the Nationalization of Railways and Mining Royalties.”

Turning to Industry and its problems the Labor candidate outlined proposals, some of which must have shocked the good folk of Southampton in 1895, and which still figure in the program of the Labor Party.

“The invention of machinery must go on. Its danger to Labor is only when it is held by those whose interests are so often antagonistic to those of Labor, and who use it for the purpose of reckless competition. We can only secure the benefits of invention by adopting the resolution of the last Trade Union Congress—the public control of the means of production, distribution, and exchange. As a means to this end, and as cures of certain grave evils in our existing social condition, I favor:

“An Eight Hour Day.

“A drastic Employers’ Liability Bill with no contracting out.

“Reform of the Poor Law, including Old Age Pensions.

"A much more thorough Factory Act than Mr. Asquith's.

"Measures dealing with the Unemployed. Direct Employment of Labor, Trade Union Conditions in Government Employment, and making the Government, *in fact*, a Model Employer.

"Abolition of tied houses, Municipalization of the Drink Traffic.

"Graduated Income Tax.

"Abolition of Breakfast Table Duties."

Other reforms favored by MacDonald dealt with political freedom, and included:

Adult Suffrage.

Abolition of the House of Lords.

Self-government for Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales, with an Imperial Federated Parliament.

Payment of Election Expenses and of Members.

Reform in the Registration Law providing for

- (1) Abolition of lodger disabilities.
- (2) Three months' occupancy.
- (3) Successive claims from constituency to constituency.
- (4) A public registration officer.

"The one thing necessary to carry the main points in this program is independence on the part of members," concluded this appeal to the electorate. "Welsh Disestablishment and Local Veto both occupy the advantageous place they now do on account of the threatened independence of their supporters. So long as you send mere voting machines to Parliament, whatever their programs may be, they are compelled to sacrifice their pledges to the convenience of their party. At this moment when so much is uncertain, and when there is a growing suspicion as to the good faith and soundness of the old progressive politicians, there could be raised no cry more fatal to the well-being of general progress and good government than that which you hear in Southampton: 'Party! Party!' The fact is, both parties have broken down. Against that cry of my opponents I am to raise the answer: 'Principle! Principle!' I am bound to neither Toryism nor Liberalism. I am Labor—responsible to you and my program.

You, not a party manager who knows nothing about you, will receive an account of my stewardship, should you do me the honor of returning me.

"I pledge myself simply to guard your interests, to advance the political principles in which I believe, and never to give a reactionary vote in support of any ministry, either Liberal or Tory, but to support measures on their own merits, whoever their authors may be."

It was a brave program to set before electors still dominated by the two historic parties. No man preaching Socialism as a practical and immediate political creed could hope to win the Southampton of that day. MacDonald did not win. He polled only 866 votes! The only comment needed is an expression of surprise that he polled as many as that. Nor were any of the other Laborites elected except Keir Hardie and Thomas Burt, but several others secured a considerable measure of support, and the future looked promising.

This defeat did not worry MacDonald. He had much to do outside the House of Commons. He was frequently away from the London lodging he called "home," preaching for the new party.

Probably he got very poor audiences for his first speaking campaign out of London, for he selected as his field of operations the South of England, with his center at Dover. That part of England is difficult ground for Socialism to-day. What chance could there have been for this pioneer those long years ago?

Thus launched upon a political career, MacDonald still found time to work at boys' clubs and to become secretary of the New Fellowship—the society of advanced Radicals already mentioned. Nor was his pen idle. He had already begun to pour out those lucid thoughtful articles on his political faith which are not the least of his services to the cause.

In addition to millions of words of Socialist argument, and thousands of political speeches, Ramsay MacDonald has written a number of pamphlets of a non-political nature.

One of these, probably forgotten by even his most intimate

friends, is called *Character and Democracy*, and is a reproduction of a speech delivered at the Leysian Mission, in London, many years ago.

In the course of this address, he deals with the importance of character in these striking words:

“Character—that power in man which enables him to see what is good in experience and what is bad in experience; that power in man which enables him to link himself with the great past and make himself responsible for the future. Character, that power in man which organizes his life so that the passing moment presents itself to him not as something that is to be seized for its own sake and when done with forgotten, but simply an incident in eternity, something that is going to yield fruit to eternity, never going to be lost, never left behind. Character, which enables man to see himself, not as a reckless or irresponsible individual, but as one of humanity, as a thought of God, maturing as the ages go until his humanity becomes divinity itself.”

This lofty conception of human aims had always been a part of MacDonald. He held fast as a barefoot boy to the ideals which he expounds in public to-day. To consider him as a politician and to forget the idealist in him—a man of deep emotions and sensitiveness—is not to arrive at an understanding of his real self.

In a previous chapter I referred to one of the great twin-forces which have made Ramsay MacDonald what he is—his Scottish ancestry.

The time had now arrived for the second of those twin-influences to enter his life, to give him courage, comfort, and a spiritual comradeship such as is rarely met with in this rushing world of modern affairs. He met, and later married, Margaret Gladstone, daughter of a distinguished chemist and Professor of the Royal Institution, and a niece of Lord Kelvin, the famous scientist.

Margaret Gladstone was one of the noblest women who ever felt impelled to sacrifice the superficial pleasures of a leisured existence to assist a cause. MacDonald had first heard of her existence when he was in St. Thomas' Hospital, in May 1895. He



had been adopted as the Independent Labor Party candidate for Southampton, and while in hospital he received a letter from an unknown "M. E. Gladstone," enclosing a subscription to his election fund.

Years after he saw a note in her diary: "First letter from J. R. MacDonald, May 29th, 1895." It referred to the letter he had sent acknowledging that subscription.

Later, he took part in a debate on Socialism at the Pioneer Club, at which Margaret Gladstone was present. Then, when he was temporarily laid aside again by illness, this earnest young worker on the newly-formed Women's Industrial Council wrote to him again. And later they met.

Margaret MacDonald has related how her family first saw this Socialist, whose fearless sincerity and advocacy of what most people then considered a forlorn hope had interested her.

It was a Sunday afternoon. Margaret Gladstone and the members of her family sat around on uncomfortable chairs awaiting the arrival of MacDonald.

The family were doubtful about the wisdom of receiving him at all, for Socialism at that time was something not discussed in polite society.

Ramsay MacDonald came at last, rather awkward and hesitant among so many strangers. Yet he impressed them all, as he had already impressed Margaret, by his sincerity and wide knowledge of affairs. I believe that Mrs. MacDonald's family never really decided whether this doughty Scot, with the flashing eyes and thick black hair, was a villain or a genius.

There was no doubt, however, that they disliked his political activities and opposed them to the end—usually without interfering with the regard which existed on both sides, but sometimes sufficiently forcibly to cause Margaret MacDonald much unhappiness.

She became engaged to him, and in November 1896, when MacDonald was thirty years of age, they were married and went to live at No. 3 Lincoln's Inn Fields, the scene of those famous



"At Homes" that were the first social gatherings the new Party ever knew, and which since the death of Margaret MacDonald have never been replaced.

Their marriage will long remain a striking example of the right woman meeting the right man at the right hour. Margaret Gladstone brought to the tireless Socialist fighter a new experience—the experience of a home, albeit a spartan home, and personal happiness. Like her husband, she dedicated her life to the Labor movement, and worked unceasingly for the cause which she had at heart, so that it was said that the MacDonald household was "a mixture of Blue books and babies."

Their marriage was a poem in real life from the first meeting to the day when her death left a sorrowing father and five children to face the world alone. As "Iconoclast" has written: "A hand was laid upon him that softened the rigidity, mellowed and sweetened the vital strength" of this restless seeker after an ideal.<sup>1</sup>

What his new-found happiness and companionship meant to him has been expressed by MacDonald himself in one of the most beautiful tributes from a husband to a wife: <sup>2</sup>

"To turn to her in stress and storm was like going into a sheltered haven where waters were at rest, and smiling up into the face of Heaven. Weary and worn, buffeted and discouraged, thinking of giving up the thankless strife and returning to my own house and children and household shrines, I would flee with her to my Buckinghamshire home and my lady would heal and soothe me with her cheery faith and steady conviction, and send me forth to smite and be smitten. No one, not even I, can tell with accuracy how much of the steadiness there is in the Labor movement of this country is due to her."

Encouraged by such perfect companionship, already, at thirty, a coming man in the movement; by no means rich yet with the days of useless poverty behind him; a parliamentary candidate in a cause which was beginning to stir men's minds up and down the country—no wonder it was with light hearts and a feeling of

<sup>1</sup> *The Man of To-morrow.*

<sup>2</sup> *Margaret Ethel MacDonald*, George Allen & Unwin, 1912.

gratitude that Margaret and Ramsay MacDonald set out on a honeymoon tour of Canada in 1896.

It was his first experience of another land, and it was typical of them both that they did not neglect the opportunity to study labor conditions and politics in the great Dominion of the West.

The visit to Canada was an interlude in a life which had threatened to spend his energies too rapidly. He returned rested, invigorated and inspired, to face his first serious clash with public opinion, and to assist in the birth of the Labor Party as we know it to-day.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BIRTH OF THE LABOR PARTY

THE man who receives a reenforcement of spiritual strength and faith on the threshold of being tried and tested is fortunate. Labor's debt to Margaret MacDonald can only be accurately measured by the few who were in the Movement in the chrysalis stage. It was she who inspired Ramsay MacDonald during the vital period of his life, when the transformation from an unknown fighter in the Socialist cause to a public figure—at once admired, hated and respected—was taking place.

Although probably even MacDonald himself did not suspect that success was so near, he returned from his Canadian honeymoon to take part in the first great urge towards unity, which was three years later to end with Trade Unionists and Socialists in alliance, and the birth of a new force in politics.

Before coming to the story of the Labor Representation Committee, the forerunner of the Labor Party, more must be told concerning Margaret MacDonald and the home life at 3 Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Without the influence of Margaret MacDonald in his life Ramsay MacDonald would still have made his mark on history. But it would have been the mark of a harder character, slightly embittered, perhaps, by early struggle and constant misrepresentation and opposition. It was Margaret MacDonald who taught the future Prime Minister to face calumny, opposition, unpopularity, without complaint, and without swerving from the chosen path.

Certainly if Ramsay MacDonald had not learnt that hard lesson, his public career would have ended ignominiously in 1914, and there would have been no further smile on the face of Dame Fortune to greet him in 1922, and to give to the man who had been execrated and hated not only the leadership of his Party

and the support of its followers, but the office of first Commoner in the land.

When they first met, he was in danger, like many young men before him who found the road too rough, of becoming embittered, too extreme, too sweeping in his judgments. Margaret MacDonald changed him. Where bitterness had taken root she planted the seeds of understanding. In place of discomfort and overwork, she brought encouragement and the fellowship of a mind which drew its strength from the deep walls of humanity. Her early life had fitted her well for what was to come. During her childhood her family was responsible for a mission carried on at Notting Hill, and there, helping in the soup kitchen (there was, of course, no unemployment pay in those days), she came in contact with the very poor for the first time, and received her earliest lessons in how they lived.

Later, through an uncle, we find her in touch with the work of the Salvation Army, about which she wrote: "The meetings are very interesting, and give one an insight into a different aspect of love and worship of God to one's own; there is, of course, a good deal of repetition and sameness, but judging the tree by its fruits, the Army has done an immense amount of good, and its soldiers, as far as I have seen them, are full of holy zeal and steadfastness."

Her first actual experience of the social work to which she afterwards devoted her life was in 1889, when she became a teacher in the Sunday-school at St. Mary Abbott's, London. This led a little later to her giving one evening a week to running a boys' club.

"The boys were unruly," states Mr. MacDonald in his book on her life,<sup>1</sup> "she bemoaned that her discipline was bad, but she had an affectionate regard for her scholars. They sometimes walked home with her; sometimes had tea with her; they talked to her about their work, their families, their friends. She visited them and got to know their people."

Events were bringing this gently-nurtured girl into ever-closer contact with the poor, and sowing the seeds which were to blossom into open sympathy with the Socialist creed.

<sup>1</sup> *Margaret Ethel MacDonald.*

Often troubled in spirit as she learnt from actual experience how hard life was for the many, she gave more and more time to social work. She became a school manager, and later secretary of a London District Nursing Association.

"An unemployment agitation had begun," writes Mr. MacDonald, "and she notes (in her diary) that she went to Tower Hill to hear the speeches. Her attitude had changed. The patients of the Nursing Association particularly interested her. She went to see them, she tended them, she heard their tales, and she felt in them the omnipresent soul of humanity."

In April 1896 Margaret Gladstone joined the Independent Labor Party, and from that date threw all her energies into the Socialist cause.

Her aim in life she summed up in these words: "I must be filled with joy if my feet are on the right road and my face set towards 'the gate that is called Beautiful,' though I may fall many times in the mire, and often in the mist go astray."

Such was the woman who will long be remembered as the most gracious spirit that ever dedicated itself to the service of the working-class movement, and whose love guided her husband through eventful years.

During the early years of married life they spent most of their time at their London home at 3 Lincoln's Inn Fields. Later they rented a cottage, "Linfield," at Chesham Bois, where were spent most of the week-ends during the last two or three years of Margaret MacDonald's life.

Here Ramsay MacDonald found the time for his beloved books, and put into practise his own philosophy that "true happiness consists in the fewness of our wants and not in the greatness of our possessions."

Richard Whiting, in his book, *Ring in the New*, has placed upon record, under a transparent veil of fiction, a picture of the home-life of the man who was preparing the new Party for the fights ahead. After a reference to Keir Hardie, whom the writer calls the "Apostle of Victory," he continues:



"The Organizer of Victory was at hand in a brother Scot, a Highlander by race doubled with a Lowlander in the outlook on life—the most formidable combination I know. He was of peasant stock; he had been schooled by the dominie of his village; and had perhaps run barefoot to his lessons. I know that his children run barefoot for health in their London home, and have their reward for it in looking the stoutest little cherubs ever caught out of bounds. His next stage was 'Glasgie' for the humanities,<sup>2</sup> London for press-work; finally a happy marriage with one of the most refined and charming women of her time—Socialist as you all are, or may be made to be by pity and love.

"He fashioned the band of conscripts into an army for the polls, drilled them, brigaded them for the field, financed them, too, by treaties of mutual help with all the other popular parties, who, from first to last, worked hand in hand for the triumph of the common cause. What a labor! What endless journeys by day and by night to all points of, and the remotest in, our isles. Sometimes further afield on special missions."

MacDonald might have made a large and expanding income as a journalist had he placed writing first and politics second. To do so would have been reasonable, for his political activities left him out of pocket. That he gave so much of his energy to politics is an early proof of his sincerity and the strength of his convictions.

Theirs was a life of simple comforts and no luxuries—unless a home in central London, convenient for their work, be regarded as a luxury. Both were fond of walking, and found delight and rest in the country lanes of England and the Scottish hills. Theaters have never greatly attracted MacDonald—even now he visits them but rarely. Books were the biggest luxury they knew, and these could sometimes be borrowed from other and perhaps wealthier friends. For the rest, they lived spartan lives, devoting themselves to the task of organizing Labor into an independent political force; fitting themselves by constant study to be ready for the work which would have still to be accomplished when this first victory had been won.

There were never any boundaries to MacDonald's mind. The

<sup>2</sup> The writer was misinformed. Mr. MacDonald never studied at Glasgow.

story has been told of how an American engineer, over here during the War, was asked to meet Lord Balfour and wondered what he could find to talk about. To his surprise, the veteran statesman plunged into a highly technical discussion on the latest developments in locomotive design and construction, showing a knowledge of the subject that left his guest speechless with admiration.

The same story might have been told about the leading figure in the British Labor Movement. To MacDonald, politics did not mean keeping in touch with such questions as happened to be engaging public interest at a given moment, or were likely to win votes. It meant education in statesmanship in the widest sense of the word. He never lost an opportunity of increasing his knowledge of international affairs.

He swung his mind ahead of other thinkers, and when the Labor Representation Committee came into existence had already mapped out a program for the first Labor Government.

In 1898 he appealed to the Electorate for a second time, standing as Labor candidate for Hackney, in the London County Council election, which took place in March of that year.

A glance at the election address which he issued makes interesting reading. True, it was only a Council election, but the astute candidate took the opportunity of spreading some general propaganda for Labor ideas.

"I should consider it my duty as Member of the Council to push on, with greater energy than the Housing Committee have yet shown, schemes for the better housing of the workers," he stated. "I am in favor of pure water and plenty of it; cheap gas, and well-lit courts and streets; low tram fares, so as to connect the crowded districts with the parks, and enable workmen to live beyond the crowded central districts; I am, therefore, in favor of the Council acquiring the water and gas supplies and the tram services."

On the question of education, he wrote: "The Council grants for educational purposes should be carefully looked after, so that they may be the means of opening up as wide a career as possible for

the poorer children, boys and girls, of London. If properly administered, these grants would form a very serviceable ladder connecting Board School, Higher Grade School, and University."

It is strange to reflect that even in those "good old days" before the Boer War, the burden of the rates was agitating the minds of the electors—then remember, confined to householders. Yet it must have been so, for the address continues:

"The burden of the ratepayer has become an urgent question. It can be lightened, not by cutting down present expenditure, for that would mean that the Council would have to limit some of its good work, but by finding new sources of income. I am of the opinion that the Council should bring influence to bear upon Parliament with a view to securing powers to levy a special tax upon the land values of London.

"A special municipal death-duty on landed property would also be a just and profitable source of income, and the whole property of the City Guilds ought to be put to purposes of public utility."

In regard to that appeal for the taxation of land values, it is interesting to recall that the Labor Party program to-day includes a proposal for levying such a tax for the purpose of relieving the rates and providing Councils with the money necessary to pay for improvements.

Despite the support of Trade Unionists, headed by G. N. Barnes, then General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, MacDonald was defeated. But every defeat of a "Labor" candidate was but another milestone on the road to success. The idea of unity, of a separate party, which had been MacDonald's one idea ever since he began his ceaseless propaganda, was spreading. He had secured the active support of his namesake, James MacDonald, and the leaders of the London Trades Council. The Trade Union Congress, mightiest citadel of working-class power, alone held aloof, and their support was soon to be forthcoming.

The idea of working-men attempting to enter Parliament was not new. In the election of 1868 two independent "working-men"

candidates had contested seats and been defeated. These two pioneer candidates were Randal Cremer, afterwards Sir Randal Cremer, of the Peace and Arbitration League and a Nobel prize winner, and George Howell, secretary of the T.U.C. from 1872 to 1875.

A year later Labor representation in Parliament was adopted as a cardinal principle by the newly-formed Trade Union Congress at Birmingham. In the 1874 election thirteen Labor candidates went to the poll with Liberal support, and two were successful. These first Labor representatives in the House of Commons were Thomas Burt, who sat for Morpeth, and held the seat until 1923 (when he was succeeded by Robert Smillie), and Alexander MacDonald, who won Stoke-on-Trent.

A Labor Party might have come into being then, but these early members never claimed complete independence. A Conservative Government amended one or two offending laws, and the agitation for working-men at Westminster died down.

Again in 1893 the Trade Union Congress debated a resolution to form a separate political party, but Liberalism was still too strong in its ranks, and only two Unions agreed to take the necessary steps to collect a political levy and run candidates. Two further Labor members—Burns for Battersea, and Keir Hardie for West Ham—were, however, elected. Keir Hardie fought both Conservative and Liberal Parties, and was thus the first completely independent Labor member to sit at Westminster.

Not until 1899 came the first signs that the ceaseless work carried on by MacDonald and his fellow-Socialists was bringing about a change of opinion in the hitherto unconvinced ranks of the T.U.C.

In that year there occurred two events which were together to prove the turning-point in Ramsay MacDonald's life. These were his adoption as Independent Labor candidate for Leicester, on October 3rd, and the decision of the Trade Union Congress to join forces with the Independent Labor Party, the Fabians, and other bodies working for Socialism, and promote a separate Labor Party in the House of Commons.



Before dealing with these big events, it is interesting to see how far the "Lossie loon" had progressed during his first ten years as an apostle of Socialism.

Ten years before he had been a penniless, friendless boy, near to despair for lack of work and the means to feed and shelter himself. By 1899 he had been six years an honorary member of a Trade Union, seven years on the National Council of the Independent Labor Party. He had served on the executive of the Women's Trade Union League, and was sitting on several committees of the Women's Industrial Council, with which Margaret MacDonald was closely connected. He had drafted the first Independent Labor Manifesto (published in January 1899) and fought two elections—one national and one local—as a Labor candidate.

It is important to bear in mind this record of service, for it explains the ascendancy which he so quickly established in the councils of the new Party after its formation.

MacDonald never gave way to fatuous optimism. He knew better than some of his supporters how long was the road before them, how many the set-backs, disappointments, and temporary defeats to be surmounted.

In an important speech which he delivered at the Temperance Hall, Leicester, after his adoption as candidate, he said: "We have no hope that the Socialist idea is to be realized in a day. But with independent men in Parliament who 'read the riddle of the times aright,' and who have convictions, the pace can be hastened." This speech may justly be termed Ramsay MacDonald's first statement of his aims and policy as a national political leader, and it is, for this reason, reproduced in full elsewhere in this volume.<sup>3</sup>

While MacDonald was "nursing" Leicester in readiness for a General Election, he was also taking part in bigger events in London. The Trade Union Congress had passed a resolution instructing its Parliamentary Committee to call a conference of delegates of all the Cooperative, Socialist, Trade Union, and other

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A, p. 355.



working-class organizations "to devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number of Labor Members in the next Parliament."

The actual wording of that historic resolution, which brought the Labor Party into being, was drafted at the offices of the *Labour Leader* by MacDonald and his friends. It was put before the Congress by James Holmes, of the railwaymen, seconded by James Sexton, of the Liverpool Dockers, and carried by a majority of some 120,000 votes.

A committee, representing the Trade Unions, Independent Labor Party and other bodies, was appointed to carry out these instructions, and among those elected to serve on it were Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, and George Bernard Shaw.

The Committee elected MacDonald secretary, and entrusted to him the task of drafting the resolutions to be placed before the Conference, in which the plans for an independent political party were to be outlined.

Recalling this decision later, Keir Hardie said: "I remember the anxious hours spent before the first Conference was called, trying to find some one who had the necessary qualities and abilities to undertake the most responsible of all tasks at that period—to act as Secretary to the Party. Those who had known MacDonald's work in the I.L.P. felt that he was the one man above all others who, if he could be induced to take the position, would give our then nascent Movement its best chance of coming to fruition; and in the end, despite the enormous work which even then filled MacDonald's life, he agreed to make still further encroachments upon his time and strength in order to take upon himself the hard, laborious, and—remember—unpaid work of helping to build up the Movement which has now become so great."<sup>4</sup>

Thus step by step destiny was making MacDonald the architect of the new Party he had seen in his dreams for so long.

There is only one more dramatic incident in recent British

<sup>4</sup> Labor Party Conference, Birmingham, 1912.

politics than the creation of a powerful political machine by this handful of idealists, most of them poor and unknown. That was the famous meeting called to consider the plans which MacDonald and his committee had prepared.

The scene was the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street, London. The dates February 27th and 28th, 1900. The hall was filled by 120 delegates brought from all parts of the country to hear by what wonderful path working men were going to march to victory over Capitalism and gain power for the masses.

Probably no one passing the Memorial Hall while the meeting was in progress considered it worth a second thought. There were no columns about it in the newspapers next day—Socialism was not even a “danger” to be attacked. With only one independent Socialist in the House of Commons the solid benches of Liberals and Conservatives could ignore it.

One man could have told them better—the man who is to-day the Prime Minister of Great Britain. Ramsay MacDonald and his plans for the formation of an independent party dominated that meeting, and that day he at least among those present heard far away in the future the cheers which were to greet Labor’s victories in the fights to come.

It was MacDonald’s hand that guided the Conference during critical hours, and his reward came when, at the end of the Conference, he was appointed Secretary of the Labor Representation Committee which had been set up, comprising seven representatives of the Unions, two of the I.L.P., two of the Social Democratic Federation, and one of the Fabian Society.

It must have been a proud moment for MacDonald. He had exerted a deciding influence at every stage in the prolonged negotiations. And now the organized working-class movement was at last united and determined to promote its own political party. The journey through the wilderness had ended—in future the pioneers would be able to draw support from the majority of members of the Trade Union Congress, the greatest organization of workers in the country.

The strength behind the resolutions was soon to be tested. The

Committee had only been in existence a few months when it had to face the "Khaki" General Election of 1900. At that election the Labor Representation Committee placed fifteen candidates in the field. They polled over 60,000 votes, and three—Keir Hardie, Richard Bell, of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and John Burns—were successful. Ramsay MacDonald himself was defeated at Leicester.

Undaunted—indeed, heartened by the fact that at last he had a machine at his hand to assist in the task of creating what Keir Hardie described as "a United Labor Vote in support of Labor candidates and cooperation amongst them on Labor questions when returned"—MacDonald flung his enormous energy and enthusiasm into his duties as Secretary of the Labor Representation Committee.

It was not an easy task. The Committee had to face the drawbacks of all committees—conflicting counsels and a lack of decision. Their energetic secretary had to fight opposition, apathy, and intrigue. And many of the Unions still held aloof from the new movement. At the first Conference in 1901, MacDonald reported a total membership of 450,000, representing forty-two affiliated bodies, the largest of which was the railway servants, with a membership of 60,000.

The total income of the Committee was less than £250, and at the end of its first year it had £50 in hand. Evidently there was little chance of wealth and ease in the early Labor Party. Yet on that income these pioneers had managed to put fifteen candidates in the field, and to pay MacDonald £25 a year for his services as secretary.

Because it is sometimes imagined that the Labor Party provided "soft jobs" for its officials, a word may be said here regarding Ramsay MacDonald's income during the years that he was working fourteen hours a day in the service of the Party.

For the first four years following the formation of the Representation Committee, he received £25 a year, and no other money whatever. During these years the secretarial work of the Committee was conducted at his home in Lincoln's Inn Fields. In

1904 the Annual Conference of the Committee, held at Bradford, voted him a salary of £137 10s. per annum, and provided him with a two-roomed office in Victoria Street and a typist at a salary of £100 per annum.

That was all the money which MacDonald received from the Labor Party until his return to Parliament at the 1906 Election as member for Leicester, when he, in common with other Labor members, drew £200 a year maintenance allowance, provided from a special fund raised by a penny levy on membership, to enable them to live while devoting their time to Parliament.

No national movement has ever been founded on so little money. Certainly no organizer ever worked for a cause with such a complete disregard of self as did MacDonald. Whatever the future may hold for him, it is certain that with his organizing ability, and his undoubted mental qualifications, he would have been a far wealthier man to-day had he never seen or heard of the Labor Party and the House of Commons.

Before coming to the years that preceded the 1906 Election and Ramsay MacDonald's first appearance in Parliament, there is one episode which occurred at the turn of the century about which a word or two must be said.

As was only to be expected from a man holding his views, MacDonald opposed the Boer War. It will be remembered that most Radicals, including Lloyd George, took the same line. But in view of what was to happen when, almost alone, he opposed another and greater war, this first brush with public opinion deserves to be placed on record.

MacDonald has always been a pacifist, with not only a horror, but a mistrust of warfare as a means of settling anything. His opposition to the Boer War cost him and Mrs. MacDonald their membership of the Fabian Society. Opinion among the Fabians on the main issue of the day was sharply divided. On the one hand a section of the members, led by MacDonald, felt that as a Socialist organization the Fabians should denounce the war definitely and publicly. Another section supported the Webbs in their view that the war was outside the province of the Society,



and that no action should be taken either to support or oppose it.

This latter view was almost certainly influenced by the knowledge that a mild Imperialism had its adherents even among the Fabians, and that any definite manifesto against the war would cause a split within the Society and a probable large loss of membership.

Leaflets were freely distributed from both the rival camps, and eventually the MacDonalds forced the issue. A referendum of members was taken. It showed a majority for the passive policy advocated by the Webbs. Whereupon the MacDonalds and a number of their supporters resigned from the Fabians and did not again take any part in the affairs of the Society.<sup>5</sup>

During the war the famous social gatherings over which Margaret MacDonald and her husband presided at 3 Lincoln's Inn Fields were the meeting-place of Boer sympathizers. There, too, after the war, members of the Trade Unions and Labor cause met and talked with Cronwright Schreiner, Merriman, Sauer, Kritzing, and Botha.

As soon as the fighting ceased Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald went to South Africa and visited the regions devastated by the war. During this tour they discussed the problems which still awaited settlement with many of those who had been confined to the much-discussed concentration camps, and upon their return Ramsay MacDonald recorded what he had learnt in his first book, entitled *What I Saw in South Africa*.

That little book was noteworthy for the statesmanlike grasp

<sup>5</sup> I recently asked Mr. George Bernard Shaw, a prominent member of the Fabian Society at that time, for his views on MacDonald's decision. He replied: "Even if the Boer War had never occurred, it is now clear that Mr. MacDonald was right in choosing the Independent Labor Party, which needed him very badly, as his field of action rather than the Fabian Society, in which everything that could be done there was already in efficient hands. It was part of his very remarkable development from the most intractable of *frondeurs*, always in opposition, to the able and adroit parliamentarian who became the only possible Prime Minister in the Labor Party. Nothing could ever have made a parliamentarian of Keir Hardie."



which it showed of the problems at issue. Here is a pen-picture of a war-stricken land:

"In going through the new Colonies the ravages of war meet you at every step, and you are never allowed to forget that the ink of the terms of peace is hardly yet dry. . . . We draft thousands of men, each one with half a dozen grievances, nearly all completely ruined, back to the country. You see them waiting in the streets of the villages for the good pleasure of the (British) Repatriation Board, you come across them miles and miles away from the railways, living in tents or wandering about their ruined homes and grass-grown lands, pinched and patched, but not a single one will beg of you, not a single one will threaten you. You are as safe amongst them as if no war had been. The street robberies and assaults that have been so common in Johannesburg, and one or two other towns, are the work of natives or aliens. The Boer, like an Ironside, has laid down his arms, and has immediately robed himself in the garments of peace and civil order."

In another passage MacDonald recorded that the Commission sent out from England to enquire into the sentences passed under the martial law which prevailed during the conflict only upheld about 200 sentences out of 800 which came before them.

"Of these 328 were originally death-sentences too grossly unjust for the Commander-in-Chief to sanction; 119 were ordered to be released immediately; and the unaltered verdicts amount to 200 only because some of them were trivial and others were nearly expired sentences. Looking carefully at the report," comments MacDonald, "I should say that the real meaning of the Commission's decisions is that not 50 of the 800 received justice."

One more quotation may be of interest, if only because it reveals a power for descriptive writing even then highly developed, which confirms the fact that Fleet Street lost an outstanding journalist when MacDonald entered the political arena.

"For weeks I followed the fresh footprints of the god of war. I puffed along hundreds of miles of railway protected by blockhouse, trench and barbed-wire entanglement; I saw the roadside strewn with

the bones of horses and cattle, and felt the stench of putrifying flesh on the veldt; I drove through the desert silences, and the burnt pastures where sheep used to bleat and cattle low; I looked upon the blackened walls of burnt houses, and met the melancholy family returning to the crumbling ruins of its home, and the miserable Tommies packed in coal wagons and cattle trucks, going down to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, or East London. Above all, I stood by solitary graves where only the shepherd or the herdsman will ever wander, and saw the crowded crosses outside the camps where the little children sleep. Such is the pageantry of war when one meets it face to face."

For the policy represented by Joseph Chamberlain in London and Lord Milner in South Africa, Ramsay MacDonald had nothing to say but condemnation. In summing up the prospect of governing South Africa by placing the Boers under the heel of the "loyal" Dutch of the Cape Colony and the British, he remarked: "Lord Milner represents an Imperial policy that must end in failure—a failure which will be equally disastrous whether it results in civil war or in the degradation of the Dutch to hewers of wood and drawers of water."

History did not pass judgment on that prophecy, for four years after MacDonald came to that conclusion the defeat of the Conservative Government at the 1906 election brought the Liberal Party to power, and soon after a generous measure of self-government was granted to the new South Africa, including the former Boer Republics, with what beneficial results to the Empire the response of the Union in 1914 revealed.

MacDonald's pro-Boer speeches aroused public opinion against him, and he had to face a certain amount of opprobrium. Opposition he was used to. But this was something new in his experience. Without discussing whether he was right or wrong in his attitude, it may be said that many Liberals, in addition to Socialists, agreed with him that the war was an unjustified recourse to arms for national and economic ends.

His pro-Boer views probably cost him his chance of winning Leicester in 1900, and condemned him to six further years of useful spade work for the Party before his parliamentary career

was to begin. At the "khaki" election no Boer sympathizer stood any chance of being elected for an English seat, although Carnarvon was faithful to Mr. Lloyd George.

Those six years were, however, to be of inestimable service to the new political force. MacDonald had made the Independent Labor Party branch at Leicester second only to the Bradford branch in strength. The fact that it could not secure his return in 1900 enabled him to devote the period between that date and 1906 to completing his task as the supreme architect of the new political party untrammelled by parliamentary duties.

Three times in his life—the last time in 1924—MacDonald has sacrificed his health in the effort to crowd two full-time jobs into one life. He has never spared himself. Had he entered Parliament in 1900 he would have been the diligent member of Parliament he has always been, and worked just as hard at his task of Secretary to the Labor Party at the same time. No one who knows what that task entailed will doubt that such an attempt might have wrecked his fierce energy and resilient constitution.

What he accomplished between 1900 and Mr. Balfour's appeal to the country on the Tariff Reform issue in 1906 has been expressed by one of his friends in these words: "He created an organization, breathed into it the breath of life, communicated his own enthusiasm to others, animated candidates and constituencies."

Thus "a real political party of Labor, a party with broad national and international views, a party which dealt with working-class problems and did not concern itself merely with the return of working men to Parliament" was born.

In addition to this national work, MacDonald secured a seat on the London County Council in 1901, and on that body "served his apprenticeship" in the art of government, before he was disqualified from seeking reelection by a bogus objection raised by opponents when he was away from London. It is possible that to this experience may be traced the importance which he has always attached to Labor control of our City, Borough, and County Councils, practical evidence of which is to be seen in

the fact that his eldest daughter, Ishbel, now sits as a Labor member of the same body to which her father was first elected.

The L.C.C. was but an interlude. By 1906, Ramsay MacDonald had so far established his ascendancy over all the leaders of the Socialist Movement, apart from Keir Hardie (who led the Party in the House of Commons), that the following year he was elected Chairman of the Independent Labor Party, and his fame as the spokesman of the British Socialists was spreading abroad. On the Continent he was as well known at conferences as Jaurès, of France, or Bebel, of Germany.

In that year came the reward for his ceaseless toil when the Labor Representation Committee fought its second and last General Election.

## CHAPTER VI

1906

THE General Election of 1906 provided the first real trial of strength for the young Party. It was the acid test which decided whether the progress previously made was based upon isolated grievances, or whether there was a future in Britain for a new political philosophy based not upon the exigencies of the moment, but upon an ideal which called for a new order of society—a creed in opposition to the creeds of the two older parties.

Labor's strategy in this election campaign was to concentrate upon two-member constituencies in industrial towns, where there was a chance of one seat being won either with or without an unofficial "understanding" with the Liberals. In addition the Labor forces paid especial attention to constituencies which the Liberals had permitted to go by default in the "khaki" election of 1900.

The result of the campaign was as sensational for Labor as for Liberalism. The Labor Party, which had but four members in the outgoing House of Commons, put fifty candidates into the field and came back twenty-nine strong. Among the successful candidates was MacDonald himself, who carried one of the Leicester seats by a huge majority. Whereas only 4164 had voted for him in a three-cornered fight in 1900, this time he had a straight fight and secured 14,685 votes—the largest poll, with one exception, given to any of the successful candidates.

"The result," stated the Report of the Labor Party Executive, which MacDonald as secretary helped to draft, "was highly satisfactory. We have now won national recognition."

Examining the figures, it went on to declare: "Suddenly politicians of all parties realize that a new factor in politics has appeared; that organized Labor is already a menace to the easy-going gentlemen of the old school, who have slumbered so long on



the green benches of St. Stephen's. Every one is asking: 'What does it all mean? What does the Labor Party want? What will it do?'

"The answer to these questions will in due time be given. But one thing is already clear. A new party which can place its candidates in the historic constituency of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, with one of the highest votes in the whole country; a party which can win seats in Bradford and Glasgow; in Dundee and in London, against the nominees of both Liberals and Tories, has a future before it, and it will have a hand in the making of history."

Although Ramsay MacDonald stated <sup>1</sup> after the Election that "a careful and intelligent examination of our records will really show how little, and not how much, we owe to the Taff Vale decision," independent students of politics do not agree with him, and it is generally admitted that the famous legal fight of 1901, which had led to the declaration by the House of Lords that a Trade Union was liable to be sued for the acts of its servants, had produced a deep resentment among the working classes, which undoubtedly contributed to the success of the Labor candidates.

In view of the part which the Taff Vale decision played in this election, and in strengthening Labor's political machine in the years ahead, an outline of this milestone in the story of Trade Unionism will not be out of place.

Until comparatively recent times Trade Unions were illegal associations. After long agitation, extending over a period of years, during which it was legal for employers but illegal for workers to combine for the furtherance of their interests, this anomaly was abolished, and the law amended so that no man could be punished for joining a Union. These bodies still had no legal existence, however, and in most cases the employers refused to recognize them. Organized bargaining was therefore impossible, and strikes, as a natural corollary, frequent.

At this stage in the history of Trade Unionism the legal position of those bodies was analogous with that of social clubs. A creditor cannot sue a club as a club for debt—he must proceed

<sup>1</sup> *Independent Review*, March 1906.

against the official who ordered the goods or against the whole committee.

This was the state of the law when Mr. Justice Farwell, in the Taff Vale case, allowed an injunction to be obtained against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants as a whole, in respect of acts done by its officials, though no authority of the Union as a whole was proved; and this decision, though reversed by the Court of Appeal, was afterwards upheld by the House of Lords.

Briefly, it laid down that the property of a Trade Union was liable for damages inflicted by the acts of its officials. Thus, any employer who suffered damage by a strike recognized and supported by a Trade Union could take action against that Union in a Court of Law, and the whole of the Union funds were liable to forfeit.

Such a judgment struck at the very roots of the organized working-class movement, and with one voice the whole of Trade Unionism demanded that the law should be amended.

That was not the end of the matter. A further point raised by the judgments which the Law Courts had given upon the existing law, and particularly upon the "watching and besetting" clause of the Conspiracy Act 1875, had rendered peaceful picketing practically impossible.

This provided a challenge to the growing political consciousness of the British working-class movement which it decided must be fought and beaten at all costs. Unless Labor secured a drastic change in the law, further cooperative action for the protection of the workers' interests would be impossible.

The Liberal Party was pledged to such reform as would leave the Unions free to bring any peaceful pressure, in the shape of the right to strike, upon employers, and would prevent either the sequestration of Union Funds or outside interference in the internal affairs of those bodies. But this was legislation in the drafting of which Labor desired to have a definite, if not a dominating, voice, and undoubtedly much of the indignation felt by the rank and file of Trade Unionists was expressed in votes cast for Labor candidates.

After discounting the Taff Vale decision as an asset to the Labor Representation Committee, however, the progress made by the Party, as reflected in the 1906 election, was still remarkable.

Remember that the decision to form a separate parliamentary party had not been taken until 1899, and that this was, therefore, only the second appeal to the country in which Labor had taken part, and look at these figures for the fifty constituencies in which Labor candidates went to the poll:

Total votes polled by all parties.....	859,518
Votes polled by L.R.C. candidates.....	323,195
Percentage polled by L.R.C. candidates.....	37 per cent
Increase of total L.R.C. votes since 1900.....	247,695

Flushed with victory, and confident that their increase of membership was but the first step along the road which would carry them to power, the first action of the Labor Representation Committee, when it met on the morrow of the General Election, was to drop that short-lived title, and in its place adopt the name of "The Labor Party"—the very name indicative of the widening hopes with which its leaders faced the future.

Ramsay MacDonald's attitude at this juncture may be described as a "sure belief and reasoned optimism." He believed beyond all possibility of doubt in the permanence and future growth of the machine which he had helped to fashion. Writing shortly after the appeal to the country, he declared:<sup>2</sup> "If the present Labor Party, like its predecessor of about forty years ago, had arisen owing to the resentment of Trade Unions against any specific grievance, it would be useless for any one to discuss its policy and its future, because it would have neither the one nor the other. Its grievance would now be removed with its success, and it would disappear.

"One has good reason for believing, however, that the present Labor Party is not a wayside shoot which is to wither as fast as it has sprung up. It has grown up naturally out of preceding

<sup>2</sup> *Independent Review*, March 1906.

political circumstance. Ever since the wage-earner in the boroughs has been enfranchised, he has been losing his confidence in the Liberal Party, because his political demands have been merging into his Trade Union demands."

After dealing with the failure of the Tories to do anything for the wage-earners, he continued: "Meanwhile the propaganda of Socialism has told. In that propaganda alone have the various bitter experiences of Labor, and all the various objectionable features of social inequality, been organized and presented to the people in a systematized wholeness. The politics of the Socialist may be enormous; they may be absurd. But they deal with life. They raise broad, interesting, and vital principles. They open out rich fields for the imagination, boundless tracts inviting exploration. Men of pettifogging minds ask how bottles are to be washed under Socialism. The Socialist pities them and marches on—perhaps taking the trouble to invite them to come along and see."

After dealing with the duty of the Labor Party to insist upon the passing of the Trades Disputes Bill (to amend the law relating to Trade Unions), to secure amendment of the Unemployed Act passed in the previous Parliament, and to take a distinctive part in Education and Temperance proposals, Factory Act amendments, and the democratization of our institutions, particularly the position of the House of Commons in relation to the House of Lords, Mr. MacDonald summed up his political views in the following challenge to the older parties:

"We must get rid of the remaining burdens of feudalism, in order to repopulate the country and make our agriculture flourish; we must put great national works, like railways and canals, to social uses, and save them from the control of a handful of private persons who use them for their own aggrandizement; we must accept responsibility for the man who wants work but can find none, and for him who has yielded to ruinous temptations because society has made it easy for him to fall; we must regard our children, physically, mentally, and morally, as our one indisputable form of national wealth, and guard them accordingly.



In every case our method must be to challenge the existing order, and compel it to show why it should exist. That landlords shoot, employ flunkeys, and subscribe to Tariff Reform Leagues, is no reason why the whole nation should be impoverished by a system of private monopoly in land; that the Stock Exchange and railway directors have manipulated railway stock, is no reason why British trade should have to bear for ever unnecessarily heavy transport charges; that a man can get no employment in the open market, is no reason why the community which he has enriched should not trouble in the least about him if he refuses to become a pauper; that a man has been tempted by high wages as a youth to engage in some occupation which taught him nothing, and from which he was excluded when he reached the age of eighteen or twenty, is no reason why he should be abandoned to become a total wreck.

"Those conclusions," MacDonald continued, "are reached, not by a process of economic reasoning or of working-class experience. They rest upon conceptions of right and wrong common to all classes; and the greatest work of all that the Labor Party has to do is to compel those conceptions of right and wrong to pass judgment upon existing social conditions. There is a time for details and definite proposals; and there is a time for general principles, which may even be so vague as to be little more than yearnings and aspirations. The Labor Party will do well to practise both habits of mind. If it dwells in either one exclusively, it will come to naught. If it dwells in both, it will create a new public opinion, it will be the nucleus of a new party of the intellectual and ethical democracy, which, for a century or so, will carry great legislative measures, aimed at advancing human character and improving communal efficiency."

The "definite proposals" which Ramsay MacDonald refers to above as being of equal importance to general principles were elaborated at some length during the discussions which took place at the sixth Annual Conference of the Party held in London on February 15th and the two following days. The fact that the Movement was still flushed with victory lends special interest to



the program supported by the delegates, including, of course, Ramsay MacDonald as secretary of the Party.

It is significant of feeling roused by the Taff Vale decision already referred to that the first resolution debated declared that:

"In view of the continued adverse decisions of the Law Courts affecting Trade Unions, and the recent action of the Chief Registrar in relation to rules affecting Labor Representation, the Conference hereby instructs its Labor M.P.'s to draft and introduce into the House of Commons, as early as possible, a Trade Union Amendment and Consolidation Bill, defining the position of the Trade Unions in the clearest possible terms."

The resolution was agreed to without debate, and the Conference turned to the consideration of a resolution on unemployment which reads strangely when we remember that by many the years between 1903 and 1914 are still referred to as "the good old days."

After a debate, during which one speaker reminded those present that behind them "were hungering men, women and children, fireless grates and empty cupboards," it was decided unanimously that:

"This Conference reaffirms its former declarations that Unemployment is the direct outcome of the private monopoly of land and capital and the consequent want of organization of industry in the interest of the community, warns the workers against the Emigration schemes which are being promulgated as a remedy against unemployment, and declares the Unemployed Workmen's Act to be totally inadequate as a measure for even temporarily alleviating the suffering arising from unemployment, and demands its amendment on the lines of enlarging the powers conferred upon the new authorities in respect of its financial provisions, the limitation upon earnings, and the inquisitorial nature of the records required of applicants for work; and further declares that, inasmuch as the question is national in its scope and bearing, it should be dealt with on a national basis, and decides vigorously to press this view on the attention of Parliament and the country."

Other resolutions passed at the 1906 Conference dealt with equal voting rights for men and women in parliamentary elec-

tions, Education, Early Closing for Shops (seeking to establish the principle of compulsory closing and the limitation of shop assistants' hours to sixty a week), International Relations, and Local Veto.

More interesting, in the light of present-day politics, was a resolution dealing with Taxation and Social Reform. This stated:

"That in view of the difficulty of meeting the cost of schemes of Social Reform, because taxation, as at present levied, falls so oppressively on the industrious classes, and being of opinion that the cost of Social Reforms should be borne by socially-created wealth such as rent and interest; and, further, being of opinion that a just distribution of the burdens of taxation is an excellent means of affecting the transfer of land and capital from private to public ownership; this Conference declares that it should be a definite policy of a Labor Party to secure a readjustment of taxation so that the National income and the cost of Social Reform should be levied by a system of taxation designed to secure for the community all unearned incomes derived from what is in reality communal wealth."

Such, in brief outline, were the subjects and decisions out of which was fashioned the program and principles that the twenty-nine Labor representatives were pledged to further by every means in their power in the new Parliament, which met under the Premiership of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. That Ramsay MacDonald fully supported the decisions of the Conference is on record, for he was one of the chief speakers at a Labor Demonstration to celebrate the election victories which was held at the Queen's Hall, London, while the Conference was in session—a meeting described by him on that occasion as "the first meeting that had ever been called in any town in the country to celebrate the return of a genuine Labor Party to the House of Commons."

A report of that speech, as preserved in the official records of the Labor Party, is reproduced in Appendix B at the end of this volume. Here I quote only one passage. After remarking that their opponents had called the Labor Party program "unpractical," MacDonald declared with scorn: "The other parties had



THE FIRST PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS OF THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS SHORTLY AFTER THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1906

(Left to right) Arthur Henderson, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Keir Hardie and David Shackleton



ruled the country, the national income of which was now in round figures 1800 million; yet these practical people could not solve the unemployed problem, nor answer the question why men and women were 'too old at forty,' or how to keep decent, honest, honorable men and women out of the workhouse. These 'practical' ruling classes had been blind to over-population and overcrowding in the towns; yet if they would go with him on a railway journey to any part of the country, north, east, south or west, he would show them acres upon acres, square mile upon square mile, of land out of cultivation.

"The other day," he continued, "a few hundred boot and shoe operatives tramped to London. They had holes in the bottoms of their boots, and they had to shoe them out of their charity in London. Yet this 'practical governing class' told them that there was no demand for these men's labor as boot and shoe makers—nevertheless every man was improperly shod. What a strange mystery it was!"

Shortly after his entry into Parliament, Ramsay MacDonald outlined at length the "yearnings and aspirations"—to quote his own words recorded above—of the Socialist Movement at that time.<sup>3</sup>

"The Socialist objective<sup>4</sup> is a State wherein labor will meet with an adequate reward and human life be valued above property. To-day, property rules life, and life is bent and twisted so as to fit into the contorted ethics and other imperatives of this property-worshipping age. The Socialist believes that so long as private property in things essential to human well-being is recognized, so long will property dominate life. An essential feature of the Socialist State will, therefore, be the common ownership of all those forms of property in the use or abuse of which the whole community is more interested than private individuals, and the employment of such property for common ends and not for private profit."

<sup>3</sup> *Socialism*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald. T. C. & E. C. Jack.

<sup>4</sup> At that date twenty-four of the twenty-nine Labor M.P.'s were Socialists, but Socialism had not yet been incorporated in the Constitution as the economic basis of the Party.



The brand of Socialism favored at that time by MacDonald is even more clearly revealed in this passage from the same book: "The first task of the Socialist living in these transition times is to make the public familiar with the distinction, on the one hand, between property which enables the holders to exploit the labor of other people—property which means the impoverishment of society—and, on the other hand, property which an individual must possess in order to enable him to live and develop his individuality. Between the two extreme limits of such a classification of property, there is a graded scale with a middle zone where classification is impossible. But the extremes are perfectly clear. On the one side, there is land, the value of which is to the greatest degree dependent upon the community; on the other side, there is food, clothing, a living income. The Socialist policy regarding the first is State ownership; regarding the second it is private ownership." <sup>5</sup>

Regarding wealth and taxation, MacDonald expressed his views in these words: <sup>6</sup> "The principle that each should contribute to the State revenues according to his ability is of secondary importance to the Socialist, to whom the fundamental principle of the levying of State income is that the State should secure for its own use the values that are created by the existence and activity of the State.

"It is quite possible to classify incomes so that those gained solely by individual energy may be placed on one side, and those obtained by exploiting the community may be placed on the other. Incomes display a graduation of merit, not all merit on one side and all demerit on the other. In a sense, nearly all incomes made in settled society depend upon the existence of the State. But there are extremes which very properly can be classified into those which the individual has earned and those which the community has created. Most of the rent for land, practically the whole of urban rents, are communal in their origin. Most of the dividends paid by undertakings like railways and municipal

<sup>5</sup> *Socialism*, 1907, p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

services, and particularly by most undertakings, the nominal capital of which is in excess of the capital actually absorbed in starting and developing them, should be similarly regarded. To say, for instance, that the private enterprise of railway shareholders and directors made our railways flourish, is a proposition which no one can defend seriously for a moment."

For this reason Ramsay MacDonald advocated an income-tax increasing in heaviness "as the source approximates in character to rents from urban land, and all but disappearing when incomes are, for all practical purposes, solely the result of individual effort."

As a warning to headstrong sympathizers, or perhaps to attempt to allay the fears of those who, in MacDonald's own phrase, believe that "Socialism covers a multitude of sins," he is careful to point out that "the Socialist change must be gradual and must proceed in stages, just as the evolution of an organism does." Here we may detect an attitude of mind which his early training must have helped to shape. MacDonald has always viewed progress as a scientific progression rather than a series of hops and jumps.

This moderation is all the more noteworthy when we consider the fruits of Socialism as outlined by him at the beginning of his Parliamentary career.

"As we approach the Socialist State by the changes in property-holding and in finance which I have indicated, certain things will happen. The weight of economic and social parasitism now preying upon the industrial State will be lightened, prices of commodities will fall, the volume of exchange will swell, and the average standard of life will be materially improved. The industrial efficiency of the country will be vastly increased.

"But the saving which will arise from the destruction of parasitism and Dick Turpinism must be fairly distributed. Some of it will, of course, go to cheapen commodities, and this will at once improve the standard of living at home and increase our efficiency as competitors in foreign markets. But that will not absorb the whole advantage. Both a reduction in working hours

and an increase in wages will be possible. Sweating will disappear. Women's cheaply paid labor will no longer compete with men's. Industry will be steadied and unemployment as we now know it will cease. The road to the Socialist State will be opened up."

These, then, were the views held by Ramsay MacDonald at the moment when he emerged from the dim borderland of Labor committees and conferences into the full limelight of a public career in the political arena dominated by the giant figures of Joseph Chamberlain, Arthur Balfour, Herbert Asquith, Campbell-Bannerman, and David Lloyd George.

Not only did he accept these views himself. "The mass of the people," he wrote, "are prepared to accept the new doctrines not as absolute ideas, as the fully-fledged Socialists do, but as guiding principles in experimental legislation. That is what the rise of the Labor Party means." And then follows this remarkable prophecy—remarkable in view of the political history of the past ten years and the prospects of the immediate future—"Nineteenth-century politics without Manchesterism would be a body without a brain. So in the twentieth century, Socialism, which will be infinitely more powerful than Manchesterism was in the nineteenth, will probably fulfil itself by being the creative center of a much more powerful political movement."

The giant which stirred in its sleep in 1900 awakened in 1906. In that year Labor may be said to have definitely begun its march to power, with, appropriately enough, a Highland clansman marching beside the Scottish veteran, Keir Hardie, on the way to the Promised Land. Scotland has produced many leaders in many walks of life, but she has never produced a pair who have left such an indelible mark upon the history of their time as the idealist whom *Punch* once called "Mr. Queer Hardie" and the "Lossie loon."

For Labor the 1906 Parliament was going to provide days of crucial importance to its future. For MacDonald that Parliament meant everything he had labored for since 1893. On the

green benches of the House of Commons he must either forge a new weapon to his hand or dig his political grave.

Already, under his guiding hand, Labor was beginning to look beyond "bread-and-butter" politics—important as the Party considered these to be. MacDonald held that a Party which wanted to govern the Empire must study Empire problems, and in the autumn following the General Election he was one of several newly-elected members who visited the British self-governing Colonies in order to gain first-hand information concerning the various subjects likely to be raised in the Imperial Parliament in the near future. Then, as in the years that have followed, MacDonald showed that he possessed what Lady Rhondda has called a "world-eye." He is probably one of the few men who entered Parliament for the first time as a recognized authority upon both constitutional government and international affairs—two subjects in which he has held unchallenged sway within the Party from that day to this.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

THE year 1906 marked the opening of a new era in British politics. The creed of neo-Imperialism prominent during the preceding years had spent itself, and a growing consciousness of evils awaiting remedy at home paved the way for a series of social reforms which changed the course of our national life and still influence our well-being.

Liberalism, with a majority which broke all records, was, under the inspiration of Lloyd George, resolved to tackle the problems of poverty, sickness and old age. And the Labor Party—negligible in Parliamentary power but vociferous in the country and growing in prestige—sat at Westminster goading the Government to more sweeping measures and quick to denounce any tendency to shirk the challenge of poverty.

Realizing, as always, that the task of giving Labor a creed and unity was more important than merely achieving a cheap popularity outside the House of Commons, MacDonald gave his attention to the task of working out a complete policy, determined that the Party should be ready and equipped for office, even if the country was not prepared to put them into power immediately.

It is interesting to record, in the light of future events, that one of the first questions to which the newly-elected member for Leicester turned his attention was the problem of unemployment.

His voice was first raised in support of the claims of the workless in July 1906, in the course of a debate during which John Burns had announced that under the Unemployed Workmen's Act of 1905, eighty-nine distress Committees had been set up in England and Wales, outside London. "Of these," continued Mr. Burns, "eleven had taken no action in providing public work for the unemployed. In the remaining seventy-eight areas, applications under the Act for assistance and work had been received



from 67,000 applicants. Of these, 50,000 were qualified to receive assistance or work, and 31,000 actually received it from various funds. That is 31,000 from a working population of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  millions, or 1 per cent of the working population of the areas in which the Committees were constituted."

Speaking after John Burns, MacDonald, in his maiden speech, reminded the House that he had been a member of the Central Unemployment body for London practically since its beginning, and that he was now Chairman of one of its Committees.

After describing the "heartrending experience" of occupying that position, and criticizing relief works which "make labor look to artificial means of support, when pressure ought to be used to induce it to look to ordinary economic means of support," MacDonald declared: "The moral is not that there should be no relief work for dealing with exceptional unemployment, but that machinery for dealing with exceptional unemployment should be created before such unemployment has to be faced. What sort of legislation is possible if we wait until we see these miserable processions of men asking for our alms and trying to get at our hearts?"

Referring to the farm colonies which were being set up as one means of finding work for unemployed—a measure of relief in which many people then believed, he continued:

"I do not share the glowing views as to the beneficial operation of farm colony experiments which some people hold, but I do look upon them as a substantial contribution to solving the unemployment problem. We cannot expect a farm colony to succeed under six or seven years. At present we are groping our way in the dark. When we send a man down to a farm colony, we often have to place him upon pasture land or abandoned land. We give him a spade, set him to dig a hole, and then get him to fill it up again. That is discipline, and the men have all to undergo the experience of having their hands blistered. It is the A B C of farm-work that a man should be able to dig a hole and fill it up again. That is the reason why Hollesley Bay (one of the farm colonies) has not given the boundless measure of satisfaction which

it might do after it has been in operation a few more years. Let us give the farm colony its time."

The Labor Party succeeded in obtaining by ballot two of the early places for the eleven Fridays set apart for Private Members' Bills, and used these opportunities to introduce measures dealing with the Taff Vale decision and the legal position of the Unions, and a Bill providing for the feeding of school children.

Both Liberal and Labor Parties were pledged to introduce legislation giving full legal protection to the Unions. The only question at issue on this subject, therefore, was the form which the new Trades Disputes Act should take.

Ramsay MacDonald had thrown his powerful influence into the scales in favor of a complete reversal of the existing state of the law, as revealed by the Taff Vale Judgment, when the leading Trade Unions were still advocating a policy of compromise. Later, the Trade Union Congress sought to pledge candidates of all parties to the policy proposed by MacDonald.

The Government, on the other hand, represented in the debates by the Attorney-General, at first favored a limited measure of reform. Such a measure was actually introduced one Wednesday. Two days later, on the Friday, Labor's Bill, in which was incorporated the policy of root and branch reform advocated by MacDonald, was introduced as a Private Members' Measure and, surprisingly enough in view of the Government measure already before the House, received the support of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

The Prime Minister's support was a justification of MacDonald's policy, and although the Labor Bill did not reach the Statute Book, the Trades Disputes Act which received the Royal Assent on December 21st, 1906, incorporated many of the points covered in the Labor measure. "The Trades Disputes Bill introduced by the Government was subsequently not merely altered, but completely changed from its original draft in order to meet the views of the Party," wrote Keir Hardie in his report, made as

Chairman of the Parliamentary Labor Party at the end of the year. "It is questionable whether in the history of recent politics an instance is to be found which more conclusively proves the advantage of concentration upon a well-defined object than does that of the Trades Disputes Bill."

This Act, which may be called the Magna Charta of Trade Unionism, provided that:

(1) An act done in pursuance of an agreement or combination by two or more persons shall, if done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute, not be actionable unless the act, if done without any such agreement or combination, would be actionable.

(2) It shall be lawful for one or more persons, acting on their own behalf or on behalf of a trade union or of an individual employer or firm in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute, to attend at or near a house or place where a person resides or works or carries on business or happens to be, if they so attend merely for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information, or of peacefully persuading any person to work or abstain from working.

These two provisions—there were others of a more technical nature—safeguarded the Unions from actions for "conspiracy," and regularized the practise of peaceful picketing.

Commenting upon the measure at the time of the first attempt by the Conservative Party to introduce amendments,<sup>1</sup> Ramsay MacDonald wrote:

"The Trades Disputes Act was passed in 1906 to protect the funds of Trade Unions against actions which, owing to the exposed position of Trade Unions, could be taken in an organized way to drain these funds and smash up the Unions altogether. . . . The so-called privileges (they are not privileges at all) which Trade Unions have received by the Trades Disputes Act only equalize the conditions of capital and labor; no injustice has ever been done by the Act; the employers who complain against it are only those who wish to be able to do wrong to their work-

<sup>1</sup> An amending Bill, entitled Trades Disputes Law (Amendment) Bill was introduced on August 6th, 1912, its sponsors being Lord Robert Cecil, Messrs. Fletcher, Mills and Sandys.

men, but bind their workmen in speech and action by the law so that the wrong cannot be exposed or prevented.”<sup>2</sup>

This success which attended Labor's demand for justice for the Unions greatly strengthened the position of the Party in the constituencies, and cemented still more firmly the bonds which had been forged between the industrial and political wings of the working-class movement.

The contributions which Ramsay MacDonald made to parliamentary debates upon foreign affairs and Imperial policies during his first years at Westminster revealed the long course of study which he had given to the subject of which his mastery is most sound and sure. These problems, however, vital as they afterwards proved to be, remained of secondary importance until 1914. More urgent, more pressing, were those other problems, nearer at home, of unemployment, wages, sweating, housing, compensation, pensions, old age—the wide untilled field of social reform which the Labor Party had selected as its especial care, and upon which its voice was never silent for long.

The records of Hansard and the reports of Labor Party Annual Conferences between 1906 and 1914 show how obstinately Labor, inspired by Hardie and MacDonald, kept the problem of unemployment in the forefront of its program.

A Resolution typical of those passed year after year, was that moved at the Annual Conference of the Party, held at Belfast, in January 1907, which read:

“This Conference reasserts its statement that unemployment is due to the private ownership of land and capital; asserts that this is the most important question for the Labor Party; and declares the necessity for immediately giving powers to all local elected authorities to acquire land and engage in any trades or industries which such authorities shall deem desirable; urges the necessity of compelling all local authorities to register and organize all the unemployed in their district; and to provide work for as many unemployed men as possible; by reducing

<sup>2</sup> *Trade Unions in Danger*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald. The Labor Party, 1912.



the hours of labor of their employees to a maximum of 48 hours per week. This Conference further calls upon the Government at once to amend the existing Unemployed Workmen's Act to such an extent as to provide useful and remunerative work for unemployed men, and to make sufficient grants from the Imperial Exchequer to local authorities to enable them to give employment to all citizens in need of it."

The following year the Labor Party introduced a Bill for dealing with the problem—then, alas, of less magnitude than it is to-day. The Principles of the Bill were as follows:

- (1) A complete registration of Unemployment must be secured.
- (2) The responsibility of carrying out an Unemployed Act must become part of the ordinary work of municipal bodies.
- (3) The National Government must cooperate with the local authorities in this work.

Speaking at a special Conference held to consider unemployment in January 1908, Ramsay MacDonald stated that they were on the verge of another unemployment agitation. "To-day I notice that the returns of skilled labor now amount to 6 per cent unemployed. Honest men, fathers of families, husbands of women, who have contracted family responsibilities and citizenship responsibilities, who are anxious to fulfil those responsibilities, who by the decree of nature can only fulfil those responsibilities by their being able to find work, and who are this afternoon while we are conferring here in this Conference tramping about the streets of our industrial towns, are begging literally on their bare knees that the curse passed upon Adam that man must work by the sweat of his brow shall be passed upon them, and there is not a Christian in the land who can pronounce the curse upon them and give them an opportunity of living in a decent and independent way. The thought of that spectacle is enough to give every man with a human heart a nightmare feeling."

Continuing, MacDonald reiterated the view he had previously urged upon the House of Commons—that the time to legislate for the unemployed was when unemployment had reached its mini-



mun, when they could sit down calmly and quietly to discuss the theory of wages, unemployment, the ownership of land, the concentration of capital, and then draft Bills that would be both remedial and workable.

"Unemployment," he added, "is produced by our industrial system with the same certainty, with the same accuracy, as the industrial system produces profits. Every time that profits are being produced, the unemployment is being produced, too."

Labor in the House of Commons might be a handful, but that handful was raising a specter which none could ignore. Twenty-nine members of Parliament, with the organized working-class movement behind them, were revolutionizing British politics. The policy of "Ins and Outs" which enabled power at Westminster to be shared between the two historic Parties was being challenged. In place of two Parties, one of which wished to postpone change, and the other to control it, Labor offered a third, which aimed at the complete economic and social reorganization of society.

The Liberal Government had been returned to power pledged to deal with the most pressing domestic problems, and its period of office stands upon record as one of the most fruitful Administrations in our history.

Workmen's Compensation, Unemployment and Health Insurance, Old Age Pensions—all these questions received the sympathetic consideration of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and his successor in the Premiership, Mr. Asquith, and sweeping schemes for overcoming the worst effects of poverty and distress were placed upon the Statute Book. Labor supported these measures, while urging more thorough reforms with an insistence which had its roots in an ever-increasing industrial discontent.

Probably only one member of the Government realized that in Labor the Liberal Party faced a danger to its supremacy greater than any in its experience. That one man was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, who in an effort to meet it, hustled his colleagues vigorously along the road to social better-

ment. And even Lloyd George, astute as he was, hardly assessed at its true importance the growing power of the new Party.<sup>3</sup>

"This is a War Budget," declared the Chancellor of the Exchequer introducing the famous People's Budget in the House of Commons, "we have declared war upon poverty and disease."

The statement was true. The Budget of 1909 did more to equalize the national income than any other measure ever introduced into a British Parliament. But Mr. Lloyd George could with truth have added that he was declaring war upon the growing power of the Labor Party. The lesson of its steady growth in membership and voting strength was not lost upon the ablest Parliamentarian of our time. To his desire to strike a mortal blow at want and despair, there was the added inducement that by this quickened interest in social reform he was carrying the war into the Labor camp.

The Labor Party in turn scrutinized each proposal submitted to the House with minds sharpened by direct contact with poverty. Every detectable flaw was exposed and the remedy urged upon the Government.

A case in point may be found in the columns of Hansard for June 29th, 1908, when Ramsay MacDonald intervened during the Committee stage of the Old Age Pensions Bill, to denounce the proposal that those in receipt of Poor Law Relief during the previous two years should be disqualified from receiving a pension under the Bill.

On every platform in the country, he remarked, the Labor Party were urging the payment of Old Age Pensions to old people of 65 to 70 years of age, who, by applying for pauper relief in the previous two years, had lost their independence and civic rights. A particularly bad case had been brought to his notice concerning a woman, aged 72 years, whose husband, aged

<sup>3</sup> When a Liberal M.P. sitting for a South Wales mining seat told Mr. Lloyd George during the War that his hold upon the Welsh industrial seats was passing to Labor, the then Premier replied that he would fight both the Tories and Labor in South Wales and beat them every time. The Liberal Party at that time held all but a few of the seats in that area. In the 1929 election they held two and Labor held twenty-four.

74, was a shoemaker who had been unable to work for some years owing to rheumatism. The woman herself was strong and hearty, and had worked for two years, prior to June 1st, as a general servant, but had lost her work owing to a daughter of her employer coming to reside at home. Previous to this, she had worked as a cleaner at an office in the Inner Temple. Her character was satisfactory. Being unable to work, the husband applied for parish relief, and had been allowed for some years three shillings a week with which he had paid the rent. These people had been disqualified for Old Age Pensions because the man had received Poor Law Relief.

Facing the crowded Liberal benches across the House, MacDonald fired Labor's challenge at the Chancellor. "Are the Government going deliberately, and in cold blood, to say to the pauper of seventy, seventy-one and seventy-two, who had received relief during the previous two years: 'You have got to die a pauper, and benefits that are going to be derived under the Bill can only be derived by men and women two and three years younger than you?'"

MacDonald added that the Bill, as it stood, meant that the sum-total of human suffering for five years, from sixty-five to seventy years of age, was going to be increased as the result of the passing of the Bill. There were thousands of these people who would bring themselves to the brink of starvation rather than apply for pauper relief if thereby they would forfeit their right to an Old Age Pension. "The Government," declared MacDonald, "are going to put inducements in their way to undergo this privation."

Labor was not content with the skeleton of statistics concerning poverty and suffering in Parliamentary Debates, but clothed the problems with grim facts. The presence in the House of Commons of the new Party enabled the voice of the masses to be heard in the supreme Court of the nation.

There was no question which affected the happiness of the humblest home to which they did not give attention. Factory conditions, shop assistants' hours, sweating, education, sickness,

armaments, industrial insurance legislation, a National Minimum Wage—the official records of pre-war days are littered with the evidence of Labor's ceaseless efforts to secure reform.

Those years have been called by thoughtless people the "good old days," but in the interests of truth it must be admitted that events favored the new Party. Trade might be booming, the nations might be at peace, yet all was not "for the best in the best of all possible worlds."

The official figures relating to wages are interesting, for they reveal that MacDonald was justified in his contention that the workers were not receiving their share of the growing profits of industry. Over a period of eleven years from the opening of the century, the aggregate wages paid to the group of workers included in the Board of Trade statistics actually declined by a substantial amount. The figures of these movements in aggregate wages per week as published by the Board of Trade<sup>4</sup> show quite clearly the most important reason for the gathering industrial unrest which came to a head in 1910, and which affected most industrial nations as well as our own. This was the period when Syndicalism raised its ugly head in other lands and its British equivalent—"direct action" and the General Strike—was first discussed in our time as an industrial weapon that might be used in this country:

1901.....	minus	£76,587
1902.....	minus	72,595
1903.....	minus	38,327
1904.....	minus	39,230
1905.....	minus	2,169
1906.....	plus	57,897
1907.....	plus	200,912
1908.....	minus	59,171
1909.....	minus	68,922
1910.....	plus	14,534
1911.....	plus	34,578
1912.....	plus	131,611

<sup>4</sup> "Report on changes in Rates of Wages and Hours of Work," Cd. 6471, 1912.



These figures show that up to the beginning of 1911 the decreases exceeded the increases by £50,000, so that the annual payment made to the groups of workers covered by this table was less than it was at the beginning of the century by £2,500,000. Up to the beginning of 1910, when unrest began to threaten the profits of industry and some concessions were made to the workers, the annual decrease in wages was double that sum.

Prices, on the other hand, were going up. Figures published by the Cooperative Wholesale Society showed a rise of over 10 per cent in the necessities of life between 1906 and 1912.

"Thus it is seen," MacDonald wrote at that time, "that the rise of discontent coincided with a serious rise in prices. Rents in most industrial towns were going up at the same time. The chancellor of the exchequer of most working-class families in 1910 was faced with the unpleasant fact that with an income slightly less than at the end of 1900, the sovereign was only worth 18s. instead of 20s. in the former year."<sup>5</sup>

The lesson was not wasted upon the Labor Party.

"From whatever point of view one studies the position of the working classes in the first decade of this century, one sees retrogression," wrote MacDonald. "Wages fell; compared with their economic standard of half a dozen years before, they were down; compared with the position of the wealthy classes, they were down. National wealth had substantially increased; working-class economic standards had substantially decreased. The rich had become richer, and the poor poorer."

It is not surprising that the national discontent came to a head in a series of strikes in the autumn of 1910. What was called the General Unrest began with a lock-out of boilermakers and ship-builders in September 1910; the next month the cotton operatives stopped work; and in November a section of the South Wales miners downed tools.

These strikes seriously alarmed the country, and they were but the first instalment of further disputes to come: 1911 began with a printers' strike in London, numerous minor stoppages followed.

<sup>5</sup> *The Social Unrest: Its Cause and Solution*. Foulis, 1913.



In June of that year the first great transport strike began, and the unrest reached a critical stage. In August a national railway strike was declared—a strike which, because it coincided with the great tragedy of Mr. MacDonald's life, I shall have occasion to refer to later in this chapter.

The dawn of 1912 brought no relief for the harassed leaders upon whose shoulders fell the task of quelling the spate of industrial upheavals. In March of that year began the great coal strike, and in May the second transport stoppage.

This social unrest was world-wide. "A breath of revolutionary life seemed to be passing over the world," wrote MacDonald in reviewing these events and their causes, "and the established order in every land had to grapple with a restiveness which threatened its overthrow or kicked against its weight."<sup>6</sup>

In Britain the Labor Party strove to turn the unrest into political channels. From a thousand platforms its advocates pointed to a strong, independent Labor Party as the one sure depository of power available to the workers. The results of this propaganda were not visible until the next election—delayed by the War until 1918—but they were present, for those with ears attuned to the signs, in the increasing enthusiasm which marked all the great Labor demonstrations.

The years before the War were, indeed, the golden age for the little band that looked to the future, and no man rose to the opportunity more magnificently than Ramsay MacDonald. In the House of Commons, the long preparation by which he had sought to fit himself to use the political weapon bore fruit in adroit debate and a shrewd handling of parliamentary opportunities which fully justified the note of congratulation which that able fighter, Joseph Chamberlain, sent to the member for Leicester after listening to his maiden speech.

Outside the House, too, he and his wife together were proving a tower of strength to the Party.

The Labor Party needed a social center, where all interested in its progress might gather and discuss the problems of the day,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

and the need was met by Margaret MacDonald and her husband at their home in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the scene of those famous *salons* which are still affectionately remembered by pioneers in the Movement.

It was Margaret MacDonald's creed that marriage should not mean a withdrawal from political activity, but an extension of it. She threw the MacDonald home open to all Socialists, young and old, and it became a place of call for friends from the ends of the earth, whom the MacDonalds had met during their early travels to South Africa, and later to India and Australia. When these men came to London, they attended the parties at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there met, over coffee and sandwiches, both leaders and rank-and-file of the British Movement.

No one interested in the Party was forgotten at those gatherings. A man who has for over twenty years been one of MacDonald's closest friends has told the writer how, shortly after he came to London from the North, lonely and unknown, he received an invitation to one of the MacDonald "At Homes," and straight-way found himself with friends by the score.

There, with Margaret MacDonald as a gracious hostess, he met men who were later destined to become famous in other lands. The Labor Party owes a debt of gratitude to Margaret MacDonald, its first and greatest hostess, but still greater is the debt of countless men and women who were saved from the loneliness which Ramsay MacDonald himself endured during his early days, by the kindly thought which turned their home into a meeting-place for all who cared to go there.

The tradition of her hospitality still lives. The sewing group which Margaret MacDonald conducted at her home every Wednesday afternoon still meets at Mr. MacDonald's house at Hampstead—in memory of the woman who in those early days was a shining light.

And when, thirteen years after her death, Ramsay MacDonald entered the doors of No. 10 Downing Street as the Prime Minister of Great Britain, the first gathering which took place within those historic walls included all those who could be traced of the

friends known at the "At Homes" at Lincoln's Inn Fields. If there is any form of survival after death, then that day the kindly spirit of Margaret MacDonald must surely have been present to greet once more, unseen, the friends of other days.

Official recognition of Mr. MacDonald's wide grasp of Imperial affairs came to him when he served, at the request of Mr. Asquith, as a member of the Royal Commission which was sent to India to investigate the Civil Services of that Empire—a task the more pleasant because it brought him into close contact with the late Lord Morley, who was then, and until his death, one of Ramsay MacDonald's closest personal friends.

During a previous visit to India, he had gathered the material, and reached the conclusions, which he afterwards gave to the world in his book, *The Awakening of India*. As a result of this second visit he wrote *The Government of India*, a book which is still studied by all who wish to understand the complexity of problems presented by our Indian Empire.

It was from that first visit to India with his wife that he hurried home to fight the General Election of January 1910. He held his seat, and held it again at the second election of that year. Moreover, his sure hand guided the Party to such good purpose that after the second appeal to the country, made necessary by the challenge thrown down to the Liberal Government by the House of Lords, the strength of Labor in the House of Commons had increased to forty-two members. At the first 1910 Election the Labor vote showed an increase of 183,506. At the second appeal to the country of the same year it showed a decrease of 134,888. But this set-back was more than accounted for by the smaller number of candidates, due to shortage of funds, and by the fact that the fight was conducted on an old register.

The new House of Commons settled down at once to a consideration of the Parliament Act—the measure abolishing the Veto of the House of Lords which the Asquith Government had received a clear mandate from the country to place upon the Statute Book. Before the debates upon this measure took place, however, there was a change in the leadership of the Parliamentary Labor

Party, Ramsay MacDonald taking the reins and thus earning the just reward of his admitted supremacy as a Parliamentarian within the ranks of the Party.

The official Labor Amendment to the Address dealt, typically, with that problem concerning which the Party was never silent for long—the problem of unemployment.

It was moved by Mr. (now Sir James) O'Grady, and was in the following terms:

“But humbly regret that no promise has been made of a Bill establishing the right to work by placing upon the State the responsibility of directly providing employment or maintenance for the genuine unemployed.”

Whatever the merits of this “Right-to-Work” demand, it evidently had no supporters outside the Labor ranks, for when the Amendment was taken to a division only 39 voted for it, and 225 went into the “No” Lobby.

During the Debate on the address in February 1911, Mr. MacDonald, speaking for the first time as leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, reminded the House that Labor was the only Party in the country which had returned to Westminster with increased numbers, and defined the attitude of the Party upon the pressing problems with which the new Parliament would be called upon to deal.

In the course of his statement he uttered a grave warning concerning the increase of armaments then taking place in Europe—a question he had repeatedly urged upon the attention of the country in the past.

Declaring that “we are not going to avoid a war by an increase in armaments,” he told the House that “until Germany and ourselves come to a better understanding than we have yet reached, it is almost waste of words to talk about diminishing armaments. We cannot come to that understanding with Germany unless we have the courage to state quite openly in what that understanding must consist.”



"First of all," he continued, "we must cease all those irritating and pettifogging criticisms regarding German economic advance. Germany is going to increase her markets, Germany is going to increase her trade and commerce. Germany is going to be a more and more effective competitor with us in the world's market. We had better in a scientific and calm frame of mind regard that, than constantly lose our heads, lose our tempers, and very often throw our common sense behind us and engage in foolish, windy and cant phrases about Germany being the enemy. In the second place, we have to make up our minds to come to a closer political understanding with Germany regarding certain outstanding questions, like, for instance, Germany's position, both political and economic, in Asia Minor. As a matter of fact, the sooner we deliberately sit down and consider the relative positions, economical and political, of Germany and ourselves in the world the nearer we shall come to that state of public opinion, both in Germany and in England, which will enable a real entente between these two countries to be accomplished, which will be the signal of a very substantial reduction of armaments, and the beginning of a new policy altogether. In that respect the Labor party's position is perfectly clear. We are sometimes taunted with having no sense of responsibility. I am not quite so sure about it. But in this respect, it is of the very greatest advantage to this country that there should be a party in this House, and in this country, severely critical upon all these questions of increased expenditure on armaments."

Stating the Labor view of the Government proposals for instituting a national scheme of Unemployment Insurance, Mr. MacDonald declared: "I want to warn the Government that, although we are going to accept this Bill for insurance, the measure will not deal with the unemployed problem in some of its very worst aspects. There is the casual worker—you cannot insure him; there is the unskilled workman—you cannot insure him. There is the aged worker before he becomes a beneficiary under the Old Age Pension Act—you cannot very well insure him. As a matter of fact, we accept it simply as an instalment. We shall do everything we possibly can to convert the Government as successfully to other parts of our Right-to-Work Bill as I congratulate myself that the Party to which I belong has succeeded



in converting them to the clause dealing with maintenance for unemployed persons.

After declaring that the Parliament Bill abolishing the Lord's veto, the measure upon which the recent General Election had been fought and won by the Liberal Government "is not sufficiently far advanced for us," Mr. MacDonald, in the closing passage of his speech, re-defined and expressed the policy of the Labor minority:

"When we came here in 1906, it was for the purpose, clearly defined and expressed, to support both Liberal and Conservatives if we considered they were doing good by their proposals to the great mass of people. We came here as an absolutely independent force. We remain an independent force—absolutely independent. I know perfectly well hon. members opposite may find it rather inconvenient when they have arrayed themselves in sheep's clothing and when we laugh at their carnivorous teeth. Nevertheless, the Labor Party remains in precisely the same position it took up when it came here first of all. Our support for the Government is going to be, not for the Government as a Government, but for the measures which the Government produce. We remain and stand here, representing Labor, an independent factor in this House as we are in the country. We are encouraged to continue in the position, first of all because our constituents have approved of it time and again, because we are back here in increased numbers, and because, judging by its results, it has been the most fruitful policy that Labor and Labor members have ever adopted in the House of Commons."

In those words can be detected the patience, the skill, the sure aim and statesmanship of the man who was that day opening a second and even more remarkable chapter in Labor's story. How many who listened to that new Declaration of Independence realized that it marked the end of a Parliamentary epoch, as another Declaration of Independence had heralded the end of the First British Empire? Probably not one outside the ranks of Labor and not many within the Party. To few men or women is given the vision to recognize a new force in its early growth. In 1911, while the House of Commons knew and respected Mr. MacDonald as able, forceful, and sincere, it dismissed Labor's dream

of becoming a real national Party as the sort of exaggeration common in the Party game. Had any one told the House that within fifteen years Labor would number nearly a third of the Commons, the prophecy would have been laughed away. Had he prophesied in greater detail and seen the leading figures of that little Labor group sitting on the Treasury Bench beside Mr. Prime Minister MacDonald, he would have been regarded as a candidate for Bedlam.

But one man certainly saw that picture, or something very like it, coming true. MacDonald himself believed that the triumph of Labor was as certain as the rising of the sun. Beside that great fact, his personal triumph was of no account.

But even as the new leader of Labor regarded the promise of the to-morrows, triumph turned to tragedy—and that tragedy but the first of those personal sorrows which were to darken his life. On February 3rd his little son, David, died from diphtheria, and eight days later MacDonald's mother, for whom he had built a happy home at his native Lossiemouth, followed the child.

Those heavy blows left their mark upon both Mr. MacDonald and his wife. There was even more to come. On April 24th, Mary Middleton, Margaret MacDonald's closest friend, died after a long illness, and with this new tragedy the will to live seemed to leave Mrs. MacDonald herself.

Writing to a co-worker in the Labor Movement in the early summer, she apologized for not sending some Monthly Notes which she usually contributed to a Labor women's publication by saying: "I am not ill—only tired."

Perhaps she was trying to convince herself as well as others that only rest was needed to restore her to her former health. If so, the effort failed. On July 23rd she was taken seriously ill at the country cottage at Chesham, where the MacDonald family spent most week-ends. The first symptom of her illness was an irritation on her wedding-finger. "It is protesting against its burdens," she said with a smile. She was brought back to London, where a specialist diagnosed blood-poisoning of a serious nature.

That summer was one of record heat, and for more than three months the patient lay fighting a hopeless fight while outside were brazen skies and burning pavements.

In August the great railway strike paralyzed and shocked the country, and MacDonald, as Chairman of the Parliamentary Labor Party, had to leave his wife's sick-bed and strive for peace. Only the stern call of duty would have taken him away at such a time, and no one will ever know what strain he underwent, for the drama of those sad days seemed never-ending. On one occasion the doctor asked for ice to ease the invalid's fevered body, and in the absence of Mr. MacDonald, who was at a strike conference, a friend set out to find some. But the strike which had paralyzed the country had stopped London's ice supply. Distractedly, the good Samaritan hurried from place to place seeking the ice which would bring ease to the sick woman. He tracked down the only ice in London—in the refreshment-room at the House of Commons—and carrying his precious burden to a tram, rushed back to Lincoln's Inn Fields with it.

Has anything more pitiful than that hunt for ice, which MacDonald's own followers were holding up, ever come from the brain of a fiction writer?

The railway strike ended, but the patient grew worse. When, on September 7th, Sir Thomas Barlow stated that he did not think she could live more than two or three days, Ramsay MacDonald was forced to realize that their idyllic married life was coming to a close.

His wife received the verdict with the calm courage which only the most fearless can show when facing death. As the end drew near, she faced her fate unflinchingly, bidding her friends not to worry, but to carry on the work to which she had dedicated her life.

Ramsay MacDonald, at that moment, walked through a valley so dark that the most bitter phases of his political life were, by comparison, mere pin-pricks to his spirit. Opposition, opprobrium, hate—these things have always left him unafraid, un-

daunted. But the loss of his life-partner shattered even his iron self-control.

On the day before she died Margaret MacDonald asked her husband to go into another room, and to begin to write down the story of their life together, while the facts were fresh in his memory. Thus passed her last hours on earth, without a fear and without a regret except for those she left behind, while her husband strove to express on paper a fragment of the overwhelming love that tore his whole being.

"She told us that had she to begin life again, she would pray to be allowed to live it in the same way; she commended to us the people and the causes that she had been helping, and on September 8th died, when the sun was robing itself in its setting glory, and filling the room with the mournful light of early evening."

I quote from his biography, *Margaret Ethel MacDonald*, which will long rank as one of the most perfect tributes from a husband to a wife in our language.

Others, too, paid homage to the memory of this loved woman.

"She was only 41, and it seemed to our blind eyes that before her were many years of such service as she alone could render," wrote one who had been at school with her,<sup>7</sup> "for she had so many friends—so many enlightened women were drawn to her by the beauty of her character, by her concern for humanity, and by the sane yet sympathetic view she took on questions of the day—that her influence seemed to be unbounded."

Said another who worked with her:

"She could work until she ached and not be tired. She could fail a hundred times and not be beaten. She could suffer rebuffs and ingratitude, and desertion and defeat, and still keep flying the flag of her unconquerable spirit.

"Her exhaustive knowledge, her acumen, and sunny wisdom were as wonderful as her courage and pertinacity. Who sought her aid without receiving wise direction?

"How can it be that this dear indispensable woman should be taken, while the unprized pack of us remain? Striking her, Death has struck

<sup>7</sup> E. J. Macrosty, in the *League Leaflet*.



every one. Quenching and scattering her splendid powers, he has grievously lessened the wealth and glory of the world."

Margaret MacDonald was the architect of the Women's Labor League, as her husband had been, with Hardie, of the Labor Party. Friends who knew her have told me of her indifference to every interest in life except the supreme task of making the world better. For dress she had an amusing contempt, so that when some of her friends insisted on buying her a new blouse for an important Conference, she appeared with it on back to front out of sheer ignorance!

Loathing the sordid, she yet steeled herself to visit the lowest public-houses so that she might be able to speak with authority on the conditions of employment among barmaids. To do justice to her achievements would need a second volume, and those who wish to read the story of her life should turn to the record which Mr. MacDonald himself has written.<sup>8</sup> Here let me quote one more tribute—spoken by Keir Hardie upon the occasion of the presentation to Ramsay MacDonald at the Labor Party Conference in 1912, of portraits of Margaret MacDonald and himself on his retirement from the Secretaryship of the Party of which he had been appointed Parliamentary Chairman:

"In Mrs. Ramsay MacDonald we had one of those remarkable personalities who by sheer worth—unassuming worth—found her way into the hearts as well as into the minds of all with whom she came into contact. Mrs. MacDonald had nothing of the demagogue in any part of her make-up. It was sheer sweet strength which gave her that wonderful power and that magnificent influence which all of us have more or less felt when in her presence; and one of the great mysteries of life was that such a nature, so richly gifted and endowed, should have been taken away ere her powers had had time to be utilized to the extent they might."

With the death of his wife there closed a chapter in MacDonald's life that will never be re-opened. Each had given to the other the whole of their love. Those who have only known him

<sup>8</sup> *Margaret Ethel MacDonald*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald. George Allen & Unwin.

since those happy days, cannot realize the shattering blow which he sustained. Only by flinging himself with the energy of despair into the work his wife had loved, did he fight his way back to a life of renewed service.

Books, newspaper articles, reviews, continued to stream from his pen and his work, both in Parliament and outside, was as all-embracing as ever. One may suspect that he was determined to raise to Margaret MacDonald's memory the most lasting monument of all—a monument enshrined in the history of his days.

The only outward change was a heightened reserve. Over his personal life he drew a veil which none but his most intimate friends could penetrate. MacDonald the man might be criticized as bitterly as ever. MacDonald the husband kept his cherished memories sweet within his heart.

For the sake of his growing children—he had been left with five motherless bairns, the youngest, Sheila, a few months old—the family moved from Lincoln's Inn Fields to Hampstead. There the two boys and three girls were cared for by a Dutch lady housekeeper, and there the girls were educated, with the aid of funds left by their mother for that purpose, at "Tremarth," a school conducted by a sister of Dr. Horton, the well-known Non-conformist divine, which was highly regarded in that part of London.

In the House of Commons the first three years of Mr. MacDonald's leadership of the Labor forces were years of growing difficulty.

On the Parliament Bill, Labor's path presented no difficulty. When the House of Lords had first thrown down its challenge to democracy, before the second 1910 Election, MacDonald had declared: "I am a single Chamber man. I believe in a single Chamber as making for honesty in legislation. A single Chamber with full responsibility laid upon it would do a great amount of truly democratic work, but it is absolutely essential that that single Chamber should be short-lived, so that it cannot go very far away from the public will."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Speech in House of Commons, March 30th, 1910.

He expressed the view that in the social class and the social interests represented exclusively by the House of Lords was to be found the source of many of the evils necessitating social reform, and continued:

"So far as we are concerned, this is no mere barren political issue. It is a great economic issue, and we lay it down categorically and we say to the people in the country—and we shall continue to do so until this contest is over, and has been settled in the only way it can possibly be settled—we say that so long as there is a protecting wall behind which men who have sown not, reap very plentifully, and men who have strewn not, gather most liberally, so long as these things exist in the shape of the House of Lords, thwarting the masses of the country, postponing the realization of its will, and very frequently defeating it, there can be nothing of social reform except what is a mere sham placed upon the Statute Book."

Speaking on behalf of the Labor Party on the First Reading of the Parliament Bill, early in 1911, MacDonald restated this view of the Constitutional issue:

"I am not in favor of the abolition of the House of Lords itself as an end in itself," he declared. "I am in favor of these things because they are a very good and assured means of serving our ends. I want the Veto of the House of Lords abolished for the economic reasons I have just indicated. We have a certain program of social reform that we want to see carried through. We feel absolutely convinced that the House of Lords would stand in the way of that program."

More serious than the Lords and Commons fight, important as that question appeared to be—more serious even than Labor's demands for social reform—was another issue, dark, sinister, malignant, which Mr. MacDonald saw approaching. As a student of international affairs, he believed that those in charge of European diplomacy were drifting into deep waters, and that the greatest crash in history might ensue. War! A conflict which would release in a stream of death those piled-up armaments against which the Laborites had been protesting for years past.

With a group of Radical Members, many of whom have since joined the Labor Party, he challenged the wisdom of Britain's foreign policy. He also made a special study of the relations between Germany, Russia and France. Here was the seat of the danger—could any warning stop it?

To seek an answer to that question the Labor Party held a Special Conference at Leicester in January 1911, with Ramsay MacDonald in the chair.

In the course of his speech opening the Conference, he declared that: "In Leicester we have never indulged in the childish imagination of supposing that the security of a nation depended upon the number of Dreadnoughts that it put on the sea. We have never considered that a nation which based itself upon force, and upon force only, could resist the antagonism of the other nations of the world. In Leicester we have always stood for the good old Biblical dictum which was going to survive this generation as it had survived many other generations, that righteousness alone exalteth a nation and provides for the permanent security and honor of a nation."

After stating that they would be faced with a demand for a further increase in armaments during the coming Session,—“a policy that menaces our national existence,”—the speaker turned to Britain's foreign policy.

“The Foreign Minister is the First Lord of the Admiralty and the War Minister combined,” he stated. “If the Foreign Minister pursues a foolish policy, the Admiralty has to back up that policy with Dreadnoughts, and the Minister for War has to back it up with expenditure on an increased army. Therefore the Labor Party in every country must not only stand for opposition to armaments, but also for a well-thought-out and consistent foreign policy. I will not take up time by talking about that at this Conference. I hope the Labor Party will have opportunities, not whilst we are facing our friends, but whilst we are facing our enemies, during the coming Session, to say something about the foreign policy of this country; but I am bound to say this, that our present entanglements with Russia, more particularly as they have been manifested in Persia, must be a very disquieting thing to every lover of peace and international amity.”



After asking "What war in modern times has added luster and honor to our national records?" Mr. MacDonald delivered a peroration which roused the assembled delegates to wild enthusiasm.

"Providence has called us for a great work. I sometimes feel that we do not put our Labor Party upon a sufficiently high pinnacle. They are come, the sons and daughters of common men, the children of common folk, the ordinary piece of humanity that the ordinary man has produced, the children of the ordinary family, men and women whose traditions are the traditions of the worker, the wage-earner, the unemployed, the poverty-stricken, the poverty-stricken old—we have come to open a new chapter in the history of this country. And in the doing of that we are going to smooth out many a wrinkle that is now on the brow of many an honest man and many an honest woman. We are going to feed the underfed child, we are going to take care of the unemployed man, we are going to take the lost and abandoned woman by the hand and lead her into better ways and better paths. We are going to do all that if are true to ourselves and true to our democratic traditions; but I am not at all sure but that equal in blessedness with that blessed work will not be this other thing that we are going to do. We are going to stretch our hands to our French comrades, stretch our hands to our German comrades, and all other comrades from the North Pole to the South, and from the rising to the setting sun, and we are going to proclaim that blessed day when the sword will be finally sheathed and when nations will pursue the ways of peace and follow the arts of war no more."

At that Conference a Resolution was carried unanimously declaring that "disputes between nations should be settled, not by brute force, but by reason and arbitration, and urges the workers of this country to take organized action with their fellows in Germany and other lands in counteracting the influence of scares and in bringing about an understanding between all nations to secure international peace and to advance social justice."

In July 1914, events reached a crisis, and neither the Resolution above, nor the many other conferences, national and international, by which the Socialists of Europe had sought to prevent

a European war, impeded the onward march of the armed legions to the battlefields of Europe for a single minute. Whether Ramsay MacDonald really believed at the eleventh hour that the German Socialists could exert any decisive influence on the military caucus round the Kaiser is doubtful. Probably he had no illusions on the subject in his heart, even while he still strove for peace during those last fevered hours of the old Europe that passed away amid the thunder of the guns.

Certainly the irony of history was never better exemplified than in the fact that when war came, arrangements had just been completed for the attendance of British delegates at an International Socialist Conference to be held in Vienna, in September 1914.

Directly the diplomatic and political effects of Austria's ultimatum to Serbia became apparent, the International Socialist Bureau held a special Session at Brussels, which was attended by delegates representing all European countries, to discuss the dangers that were imminent.

Says the Labor Party official Report of that meeting: "It was agreed that all sections should use every possible opportunity to preserve peace among the nations, and on July 29th an impressive demonstration took place, in which Jaures for France, Vandervelde for Belgium, Hasse for Germany, Rubanovitch for Russia, Morgari for Italy, and Keir Hardie for this country, united in voicing the desire for peace."

Three days later, on Sunday, August 2nd, the British Section of the International held a demonstration in Trafalgar Square as a final effort to avert the doom which overshadowed Europe.

At that mass Demonstration, Ramsay MacDonald was the principal speaker, and the following Resolution, which he had drafted, was supported with enthusiasm:

"That this Demonstration, representing the organized workers and citizens of London, views with serious alarm the prospects of a European War into which every European Power will be dragged owing to secret alliances and understandings which in their origin were never sanctioned by the nations, nor are even now communicated to them. We stand by the efforts of the International Working-Class Movement to unite the

workers of the nations concerned in their efforts to prevent their Governments from entering upon war, as expressed in the resolution passed by the International Socialist Bureau. We protest against any step being taken by the Government of this country to support Russia, either directly or in consequence of any understanding with France, as being not only offensive to the political traditions of the country, but disastrous to Europe, and declare that as we have no interest direct or indirect in the threatened quarrels which must result from the action of Austria in Servia, the Government of Great Britain should rigidly decline to engage in war, but should confine itself to efforts to bring about peace as speedily as possible."

Before that Resolution was put to the Demonstration, had Mr. MacDonald but known it, the hour when any man could stop the orchestra of death which was tuning up from the English Channel to the Urals had passed. On that very evening Germany made common cause with Austria and declared war against Russia and France. Within a few more hours, Germany had invaded Belgium, and all but a handful of convinced pacifists were ranged behind the British Government in support of Britain's pledged word to defend the neutrality of that "little nation."

Of that great International of peace and friendship which MacDonald and a hundred other sincere idealists had striven for years to raise as a bulwark against war, nothing was heard. Jaurès was dead, the victim of an assassin's bullet at the moment when "the International Movement was going down into 'a dark tremendous sea of cloud,' " <sup>10</sup> and the other leaders of the peace movement were impotent in the face of events which they had seen approaching but could not stop.

While Labor was holding its demonstration in Trafalgar Square the Liberal Government was putting out "feelers" to see how far all Parties were prepared to present a united front in the event of Belgium being invaded.

The answers made history. Upon the declaration of war, John Burns, the first working-man Cabinet Minister, and Lord Morley, MacDonald's lifelong friend, resigned their offices rather than

<sup>10</sup> J. Ramsay MacDonald, in *Contemporary Review*, September 1914.



THE MACDONALD FAMILY AT HOME. MR. AND MRS. MACDONALD  
WITH FOUR OF THEIR CHILDREN AT 3, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,—  
A 1906 PHOTOGRAPH





take any part in the drama then beginning. Lloyd George, however, who had opposed the Boer War so bitterly, and who intended to resign in the event of Britain's again taking up arms, was converted, by the invasion of Belgium, from a pacifist into the most ardent advocate of Britain's full might being flung into the struggle. Mr. MacDonald himself, an acknowledged expert on foreign affairs, and then in close touch with Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, could have had a place in the Cabinet had he chosen to throw his influence into the scale to range Labor on the side of the Government.

But acquiescence was impossible and he refused. As he walked across Palace Yard to the historic debate preceding the actual beginning of hostilities, he may have realized that he faced the greatest political crisis of his career. Already the rising war-fever was infecting all sections of thought, among them the Labor Party itself. It is probable that when he spoke that day, he could sense for the first time the stirrings of disapproval of those whom he led. But had that path led straight to political suicide—as, indeed, it must have seemed to do—Ramsay MacDonald would not have swerved one inch to the right or to the left.

Inside the House the atmosphere was electric. Every available Member was in his place when Sir Edward Grey rose to record the decision to send an ultimatum to Germany, and to justify that step. Bonar Law followed, and then John Redmond, in an emotional scene, pledged the Irish to support the Government in the war which every one present knew to be inevitable.

In this atmosphere, throbbing already with war-fever, there rose the figure of the leader of the Labor Party. Mr. MacDonald had discussed his speech with his followers before the House had assembled and had secured their agreement. Nominally he spoke for forty-two members. Actually, as events were soon to show, the cataclysm had swept even this handful away from his side and ranged them with the Government in the task of handling the sword which "we had not lightly drawn."

There were some interruptions—mere whispers of the storm to come. The House of Commons was in no mood to hear any one

argue about the necessity for war or the reason for its coming. War was a matter of hours, and in the minds of an overwhelming majority of the British nation our path was clear.

Ramsay MacDonald ignored the interrupters. He intended to deliver his speech. He had always performed what he believed to be his duty to his Party and to his country, and he did so now.

That speech, replying to Sir Edward Grey's masterly analysis of the diplomatic negotiations leading up to the delivery of the ultimatum, is historic, and will be found reproduced in full at the end of this volume.<sup>11</sup>

"I should, had circumstances permitted, have preferred to remain silent this afternoon. But circumstances do not permit of that. I shall model what I have to say on the two speeches we have listened to, and I shall be brief. The Right Hon. Gentleman, to a House which in a great majority is with him, has delivered a speech the echoes of which will go down to history. The speech has been impressive; however much we may resist the conclusion to which he has come, we have not been able to resist the moving character of his appeal. I think he is wrong. I think the Government which he represents and for which he speaks is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. We shall see."

After analyzing the reasons for going to the aid of Belgium and France, and declaring that if Sir Edward Grey had shown that our country was in danger, "we would offer him ourselves," MacDonald continued:

"I do not know, but I feel that the feeling of the House is against us. I have been through this before and 1906 came as part recompense. It will come again. We are going to go through it all. We will go through it all. So far as we are concerned, whatever may happen, whatever may be said of us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will take the action that we will take of saying that this country ought to have remained neutral, because in the deepest parts of our hearts we believe that that was right and that alone was consistent with the honor of the country and the traditions of the party now in office."

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix C.

All the unpopularity, the ostracism, which the speech foreshadowed, were destined to break about MacDonald's head at that hour. Even he, with memories of his unpopularity during the Boer War, could not have foreseen how rough and solitary the road along which he was to walk in the years that followed. Even he did not know then that within a week his own Party was going to depose him and elect another in his place.

Not more than one person in every twenty thousand who read that speech agreed with the policy it advocated. The country knows now how Sir Edward Grey had destroyed his health and striven to the very limit of his power and ability in the effort to prevent war. The writer believes that the verdict of history will be that our hands were clean, that there was no alternative for Britain as a nation but war—either an immediate war with allies or a war later, with Russia and France already defeated.

That evening the British ultimatum was delivered: thus the greatest war in history began.

Two days later, on August 5th, 1914, the Executive of the Labor Party met in London to consider the circumstances of the situation. In view of the events of that same evening, and Mr. MacDonald's speech in the House of Commons, the following resolutions which it passed are significant:

"That the conflict between the nations of Europe in which this country is involved is owing to Foreign Ministers pursuing diplomatic policies for the purpose of maintaining a balance of power; that our own national policy of understandings with France and Russia only was bound to increase the power of Russia both in Europe and Asia, and to endanger good relations with Germany.

"That Sir Edward Grey, as proved by the facts which he gave to the House of Commons, committed without the knowledge of our people the honor of the country to supporting France in the event of any war in which she was seriously involved, and gave definite assurances of support before the House of Commons had any chance of considering the matter.

"That the Labor Movement reiterates the fact that it has opposed the policy which has produced the war, and that its duty now is to secure peace at the earliest possible moment on such conditions as will provide



the best opportunities for the reestablishment of amicable feelings between the workers of Europe.”

The hand of MacDonald can be detected in that statement, which was passed by the Executive of the Party and subsequently endorsed at a joint meeting with the Parliamentary Party. Having thus officially sanctioned his attitude towards the war, on the very same evening a majority of M.P.'s of the Party opposed the speech, embodying this Resolution, which their leader proposed to make in the House of Commons.

By that vote the Labor Party dropped the pilot who had steered them so far on the road to success. Ramsay MacDonald resigned, and Arthur Henderson was elected in his stead. Within a few more hours both the Parliamentary Labor Party and the National Labor Party Executives had agreed to assist in the recruiting campaign, thus endorsing the Government's policy and signifying their support in the task of conducting the war to a successful conclusion.

Four of his I.L.P. colleagues—Keir Hardie, F. W. Jowett, Tom Richardson and Philip Snowden—stood by the fallen leader, and with him alike were ostracized by the rest of the Party.

However bitter the path was destined to be—and none of the five could have guessed how wide was the desert stretching before them—they were at least able to declare with truth that they were only advocating the official policy to which the Labor Party had committed itself on the day following the outbreak of war.

## CHAPTER VIII

### RAMSAY MACDONALD AND THE WAR

NO phase of Ramsay MacDonald's career has been more keenly debated, or caused more heartburning even among Socialists, than his activities during the months which followed the outbreak of war. If the epithet "Traitor" is no longer hurled at his head it is not because later triumphs have stilled the voice of criticism, but because an increasing number of people are uneasily suspicious that many unpleasant events which this pacifist prophesied during the years of conflict have since come to pass. Mr. MacDonald, if he wished to pay off old scores, could point to many warnings uttered during the war which have been fully justified by the history of the past eleven years.

Even after his supersession by Arthur Henderson, MacDonald, by following the advice of some of his friends to keep silent, could have circumvented the campaign of hate which was brewing. He had only to follow the example of John Burns and sink into obscurity. But he felt it his solemn duty not only to proclaim an anti-war declaration in the House of Commons, but to continue to work for an early peace of reason and negotiation by every means in his power.

Before examining his attitude by reference to his actual speeches and writings, mention must be made to one myth which was an unconscionable time dying. After careful examination of practically every speech which Ramsay MacDonald delivered in the war years, both in the House of Commons and outside, and of his writings at that time, I find no evidence to support the charge, freely made during the 1918 and 1922 Elections, that he opposed the interests of the soldiers, sailors, and their dependents, or belittled the achievements of British arms. From first to last, Ramsay MacDonald's opposition to the war was based upon a repudiation of our diplomatic policy before the war, and of war

itself. He believed that the war would settle nothing. That it would "put back the clock of civilization a century in four years." His invective was aimed at policies, not personalities. While criticizing the policy, and later the war aims, of the British Government, he upheld the interests of the armed forces and championed their rights in matters of pensions, service conditions, and other questions, as wholeheartedly as any member of the House of Commons.

Thus in 1916, when the only portions of his speeches reported were phrases wrenched from their context and used to feed the flames of national hatred, MacDonald, in the course of an important speech in the House of Commons, urged upon that body the imperative need to work incessantly for Peace in order that the sacrifice and heroism of the fighting men should not have been made in vain:

"Merely talking patriotism, merely making perorations to speeches, and so on, about the magnificence of our intentions—that is all right for recruiting purposes, but it is no good for the hard political duty imposed upon a body like this, whilst millions of our fellow-beings are laying down their lives and are prepared to lay down their lives on the battle-fields of Europe. That is shirking our duty, and it is only in so far as the right hon. gentleman (the Foreign Minister) keeps his diplomacy active even when the noise of battle is most deafening, only in so far as he takes care that no single opportunities which the Armies give him, and no single opportunity which the men in the field give him to produce and widen out the basis of his coming Peace—only in so far as he does his duty in that respect, and in so far as we do our duty by seeing that he does his, are we worthy to look in the eyes of these men and say, that though we stayed at home, we nevertheless did help them to do their work in the field."<sup>1</sup>

Whether Mr. MacDonald's attitude to the war was justified or not the reader must judge for himself when he has reached the end of this chapter. What is emphatically not justified is any suggestion that the member for Leicester was deaf to the claims of those who fought upon the generosity and gratitude of their country.

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, May 24th, 1916.

Five days after replying, as leader of the Labor Party, to Sir Edward Grey's speech on August 3rd, 1914, Ramsay MacDonald reviewed the momentous proceedings in Parliament in the course of a weekly article which he was then contributing to the *Leicester Pioneer*.

After a reference to the Moratorium which had been proclaimed to enable the financial structure of the City to overcome the first shock of war without panic, MacDonald went on to deal with Sir Edward Grey's speech in phrases which were afterwards destined to be reproduced as evidence against him on a thousand platforms.

"When Sir Edward Grey rose to speak the Tories yelled and cheered," he wrote. "The greeting from the Liberal benches was not only less warm, but was of little volume. All through the speech that remained true. The Tories waved handkerchiefs, smiling, shouting; the Liberals, sectionalized and divided, were sometimes protesting, sometimes following the Tory lead, sometimes silent, wondering, I hope, to what they were being committed.

"The speech," he continued, "can be brushed aside as far as argument was concerned. There is no doubt whatever but that when all this is over and we turn back in cold blood and read it carefully, so as to ascertain why England has practically declared war on Germany, we shall find that the only reason from beginning to end in it is that the Foreign Office is anti-German and that the Admiralty was anxious to seize any opportunity of using the Navy in battle practise."

After touching upon the passages in Sir Edward Grey's speech dealing with the integrity of Belgium, he continued: "But what are the facts? Sir Edward Grey's justification for stirring up our feelings regarding Belgium rested upon an error. Within an hour or two of this criticism of his, he rose in the House of Commons and read an official statement received from the Belgian Legation in London in which these words appear: 'Germany yesterday evening at seven o'clock presented a note proposing to Belgium friendly neutrality on Belgian territory, and promising mainte-



nance of independence of the country on the conclusion of peace.' <sup>2</sup> Yet he had nothing to withdraw from what he had said earlier in the day. *Integrity* was not in the message; *independence* was. Earlier he gave us to understand that if Germany had guaranteed the independence of Belgium he might have been satisfied. She had guaranteed that independence, but he was out for war, and he assumed that the House of Commons had ceased to be very particular about accuracy of statement.

"The same is true regarding the other pledge he asked of Germany. Germany had said specifically that if we remain neutral she will not bombard the north coast of France. That was her first reply. The Foreign Secretary says it was unsatisfactory. He did not condescend to inform us how, or to say how far short it came of what he required, but evidently Germany meant it to meet the situation, and no diplomatic attempt has been made to get her to amend the declaration so that it would be more satisfactory to us. It is loftily brushed aside because, again, the Foreign Office made up its mind at the end of last week that it and the Admiralty would back a war.

"Never did we arm our people and ask them to give us their lives for less good cause than this. Destitution and sorrow were invited by Sir Edward Grey to come and be with us as our most

<sup>2</sup> Sir Edward Grey's statement was as follows:

"I want to give the House some information which I have received, and which was not in my possession when I made my statement this afternoon. It is information I have received from the Belgian Legation in London, and is to the following effect:—

'Germany sent yesterday evening at seven o'clock a note proposing to Belgium friendly neutrality, covering free passage on Belgian territory, and promising maintenance of independence of the Kingdom and possession at the conclusion of peace, and threatening case of refusal, to treat Belgium as an enemy. A time limit of twelve hours was fixed for the reply. The Belgians have answered that an attack on their neutrality would be a flagrant violation of the rights of nations, and that to accept the German proposal would be to sacrifice the honor of a nation. Conscious of its duty, Belgium is firmly resolved to repel aggression by all possible means.'

Of course, I can only say that the Government are prepared to take into grave consideration the information which it has received. I make no further comment upon it."

intimate guests at our firesides. They will accept his invitation, unfortunately, and in the days that will be clouded with their shadow we shall think and feel, and we shall turn against the authors of our miseries. At the same time, history will be judging and doing justice, and the speech which received the cheers of the vast majority of the House of Commons on Monday will be weighed against the lives of the men who will be sacrificed because of it, and it will be dust and ashes, prejudice and error, and nothing more."

Those who remember the first wild outburst of indignation, and the wave of patriotism, self-sacrifice, and service which swept over our country in those first days of the war, will not need to be told that the interest aroused by this statement was not confined to Leicester. Its appearance in the very week that war had been declared was sufficient to bring down an unprecedented explosion of public anger upon the head of the writer. Indeed, had MacDonald wished to be the best-hated man in Britain, he could not have selected a phrase more certain to bring about a heresy-hunt than the few words which attributed the entry of this country into the war to the fact that "the Foreign Office is anti-German and the Admiralty was anxious to seize any opportunity of using the Navy in battle practise."

Speaking at the Trade Hall, Leicester, the previous day, he had stated bluntly that he "did not believe in war, he thought it was very rarely necessary, and that when necessary it was very rarely successful."

"We are not really fighting for the independence of Belgium," Mr. MacDonald declared in this speech, "we are fighting because we belong to the Triple Entente, because our foreign policy has been conducted on the lines of alliances to preserve the balance of power, and because we have prejudices against a very strong commercial rival. We are in it and we must see it through. It is a sad thing that we, loving our own country best, and hoping and striving that we shall not be defeated or worstened or disgraced, should have as counterpart to that the desire that this great nation of Germany should be worstened, defeated, and dis-

graced. How one almost hates the diplomacy that has brought us to this."

The outcry which followed the publication of the article in the *Leicester Pioneer* was but a foretaste of what was to come, however, compared with the howl of execration which arose upon the publication, in the *Labour Leader*, of an article entitled "Why We Are at War," with the sub-title "The Responsibility of Sir Edward Grey." Then it was that the campaign of abuse turned into persecution, and even his friends realized that to announce Ramsay MacDonald as a speaker was, in London and many other cities, but the signal for the letting loose of a flood of hooliganism. From the day when this article appeared even the immemorial right of free speech was denied in many parts of the country to the former chairman of the Labor forces, although it must be admitted that this manifestation of national opprobrium in its most extreme form did not prevent MacDonald from obtaining a respectful hearing in the North and Scotland at any time during the war. It was in London and, curiously enough, in South Wales, that the main strength of the opposition was to be found, and later, in Leicester, the city of which he was the senior member in the House.

The article in the *Labour Leader*, afterwards reprinted as a broadsheet by the I.L.P., may be regarded as MacDonald's considered statement of his reasons for opposing the war. It was his justification for his attitude at that time. As such it is important to all who wish to examine the story of Ramsay MacDonald at the moment when he faced the greatest political crisis of his life, and I therefore reprint it in full elsewhere in this volume.<sup>3</sup>

Here it is sufficient to reproduce some extracts only from the full text upon which his opponents fastened as further evidence that this man was not only pacifist and unpatriotic, but pro-German as well.

"When Sir Edward Grey failed to secure peace between Germany and Russia," wrote MacDonald, "he worked deliberately to involve us in the war, using Belgium as his chief excuse. I come back to the statement

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix D.

which I think I have clearly proven—that the European war is the result of the existence of the Entente and the Alliance, and that we are in it in consequence of Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy.

"Our Government supplied the idealism for this war by telling us that the independence of Belgium had to be vindicated by us," runs another passage. "It was a pretty little game of hypocrisy, which the magnificent valor of the Belgians will enable the Government to hide up for the time being.

"Want is in our midst and Death walks with Want. And when we sit down and ask ourselves with the fulness of knowledge, 'Why has this evil happened?' the only answer we can give is, because Sir Edward Grey has guided our foreign policy during the past eight years.

"So anxious was Germany to confine the limits of the war, the German Ambassador asked Sir Edward Grey to propose his own conditions of neutrality, and Sir Edward Grey declined to discuss the matter. This fact was suppressed by Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith in their speeches in Parliament.

"Both withheld the full truth from us. Had this been told us by Sir Edward Grey, his speech could not have worked up a war sentiment. The hard, immovable fact was that Sir Edward Grey had so pledged the country's honor, without the country's knowledge, to fight for France or Russia that he was not in a position even to discuss neutrality."

These extracts from the article, and even more fully the complete text, reveal how uncompromising was Mr. MacDonald's attitude to the policy which had been pursued by the Foreign Office during the eight years preceding the war. The war, once begun, however, he never cast any reflection upon the need of pursuing it up to a point at which a peace, just to this country, France, Belgium and Germany alike, was obtainable.

Ramsay MacDonald could not withhold criticism of our foreign policy during the war, lest judgment went by default and at the end of it he were forced to stand silent while a peace was concluded which contained the seeds of further disturbance. Very early in the conflict he was concentrating upon the fact that the terms of peace would be the real test. He therefore sought to keep his criticism upon a constructive plane. But the public, determined upon destroying the menace of German Imperialism



once and for all, had no ears for any sort of criticism, constructive or the reverse, and when the German Press Bureau began to circulate passages from Ramsay MacDonald's speeches and articles in justification, out of the mouth of a British politician, for their statement that "perfidious Albion" was the aggressor and Sir Edward Grey the arch-culprit, the British public could not find words to express their hatred of the "renegade pacifist," and turned to action.

The campaign then entered upon a more bitter phase, and even achieved some reasonableness owing to the fact that MacDonald's former colleagues were devoting all their energies to assisting the Coalition Government in the prosecution of the war, and did not even appeal for a fair hearing for the little group of Pacifists headed by the member for Leicester.

When Mr. MacDonald sought to reply to the misrepresentation of his views in the Press, it only added fuel to the flames. In a letter to the *Morning Post*, which appeared in 1915, he replied to a charge that in the famous *Labour Leader* article he had stated that he "attributed the cataclysm of Europe to the Machiavellianism of Sir Edward Grey" by pointing out that he declared specifically that "Sir Edward Grey strove to the last to prevent a European war."

"The war," said Mr. MacDonald, "I wrote, was the fruit of a European policy of balances of power, and when it came as a natural consequence of that policy we could not keep out of it because we were hopelessly involved in the current of events. That is not to say that Sir Edward Grey, either as a Machiavelli or a saint, made the war, but it is to say that he could not even strive to keep us out of it when it was made. That is what I said."

The overwhelming majority of the public regarded such logic as splitting hairs. One must be for the war or against it. Therefore MacDonald's attempts to secure careful consideration of the diplomatic events that led up to the conflict, in order to build more surely in the future, were foredoomed to failure. Their only result was to inflame still further public opinion against him.

Nor did a letter which he wrote to the Mayor of Leicester improve matters. In this he explained why he would not be able to attend a recruiting meeting in that town, and clearly separated his views on the origin of the war, and his views on the duty of a loyal citizen possessing no conscientious objection to serving with the armed forces of the Crown during the conflict:

"MY DEAR MR. MAYOR,

"I am very sorry indeed that I cannot be with you on Friday. My opinion regarding the causes of the war are pretty well known, except in so far as they have been misrepresented; but we are in it. It will work itself out now. Might and spirit will win, and incalculable political and social consequences will follow upon victory.

"Victory, therefore, must be ours. England is not played out. Her mission is to be accomplished. She can, if she would, take the place of esteemed honor among the democracies of the world, and if peace is to come with healing on her wings the democracies of Europe must be her guardians. There should be no doubt about this.

"Well, we cannot go back now, nor can we turn to the right or the left. We must go straight through. History will in due time apportion the praise and the blame, but the young men of the country must, for the moment, settle the immediate issue of victory. Let them do it in the spirit of the brave men who have crowned our country with honor in the times that are gone. Whoever may be in the wrong men so inspired will be in the right. The quarrel was not of the people, but the end of it will be the lives and liberties of the people.

"Should an opportunity arise to enable me to appeal to the pure love of country—which I know is the precious sentiment in all our hearts, keeping it clear of thoughts which I believe to be alien to real patriotism—I shall gladly take that opportunity. If need be, I shall make it myself. I want the serious men of the Trade Union, the Brotherhood, and similar movements to face their duty. To such men it is enough to say 'England has need of you'; to say it in the right way. They will gather to her aid. They will protect her, and when the war is over they will see to it that the policies and conditions that make it will go like the mists of a plague and the shadows of a pestilence.

"Yours very sincerely,

"J. RAMSAY MACDONALD."

Had that letter been published in 1912, or in 1922, it would have passed without question as an inspiring and patriotic call to the country to be true to its ideals. But times were very far from normal in 1914, and the publication of this letter, with its lofty conception of our national honor, of a citizen's duty, and its clear indication that the writer criticized our foreign policy only because such criticism was essential to his hopes of a just and lasting peace, brought a new charge. MacDonald was vacillating, weak-minded. He opposed the war in one breath and supported it with the next. Within the last twelve months a member of Parliament who sat in the House of Commons throughout the war has informed me that MacDonald was in a state of indecision for weeks following the outbreak of hostilities, and he instanced this recruiting letter as evidence of the fact. Perhaps he had not examined Mr. MacDonald's speeches at that time. Through them all runs the same clear-cut policy of opposition to our foreign policy, and acceptance of the fact that once the war had started it must be waged until a just peace was possible.

It is true that MacDonald did not agree to the introduction of conscription, but his objection, apart from a demand that respect should be paid to the opinions of those who held political or religious objections to military service (it must be remembered that Mr. Asquith himself inserted the "conscience clause" in the Military Service Act and many others agreed with Mr. MacDonald on this point), was based upon a sincere belief that Britain could not put millions of men in the field without depleting our coalfields, munition works and essential industries to a dangerous extent. MacDonald may have been wrong in holding this view. Subsequent events suggest that he was. But at least he must be acquitted of any desire to impede Britain in the successful conduct of the war.

The most damaging charge against him was that his utterances supplied welcome ammunition for the enemy propaganda department. Commenting upon his charges against British Ministers, Sir Valentine Chirol summarized the popular view at that time

in a letter which appeared in *The Times* in October 1914, in the course of which he declared:

"What was the effect that such gross charges were certain to produce abroad, and especially in Germany? It was this. They were greedily welcomed as affording just the materials that were required for bolstering up the German propaganda, not only in Germany but throughout neutral countries all over the world, of which the chief aim and object was to represent Great Britain as the villain of the piece. Is it a mere coincidence that the German Chancellor himself, in framing his appeals for sympathy with a peace-loving Germany, reluctantly dragged into war by the machinations of her enemies, invariably bases his denunciations of Great Britain's perfidy on just the same sort of arguments which Mr. MacDonald employs? Is it a mere coincidence that, following Mr. MacDonald's lead, the whole German Press has concentrated its worst venom upon Sir Edward Grey as the embodiment of British bad faith, with peace always on his lips and war in his heart? It has been my business, though no longer in a journalistic capacity, to study the German Press and the Press of some of the neutral States very carefully during the last seven weeks. There is scarcely an important German paper which has not reproduced Mr. MacDonald's manifesto,<sup>4</sup> in part or in whole, to justify its own diatribes against England. So much value is, indeed, attached to it for the purposes of German propaganda that it has evidently been imported in considerable quantities into Germany in the leaflet shape, as it is being actually distributed from there to neutral States with a view to 'spreading the truth.' I have seen it also reproduced or translated in the pro-German newspapers of neutral countries with the same sort of comments and the same purpose."

In the concluding sentences of this letter, the writer expressed what was undoubtedly the opinion of most people in this country towards the member for Leicester at that time:

"In time of actual war—the most terrible war in which we have ever been engaged—Mr. MacDonald has sought to besmirch the reputation of his country by openly charging with disgraceful duplicity the Ministers who are its chosen representatives, and he has helped the enemy State—and helped it not unsuccessfully—to poison against his country the wells of public opinion, not only in Germany but in neutral States

<sup>4</sup> "Why We Are at War," by J. Ramsay MacDonald, *The Labour Leader*.



whose attitude towards Great Britain might at any moment materially and decisively affect the issue of the war. Such action oversteps the bounds of even the most excessive toleration and cannot be properly or safely disregarded by the British Government or the British people."

Could any man, believing in his heart that the foreign policy of a Government which he had been elected to oppose was wrong, keep silent? Another man might have done so when he discovered that his utterances were being distorted and turned against his own country by the enemy.

Mr. MacDonald certainly loved his country as deeply and wholeheartedly as any one else in the realm, but, facing the issues of that time, he could only say, as he had said at Leicester in the first week of the war: "It is a sad thing that we, loving our own country best, and hoping and striving that we shall not be defeated or disgraced, should have as a counterpart to desire that Germany should be defeated and disgraced." He hated the diplomacy which had brought the intellectual leaders of Europe to such alternatives and, hating it, could not remain silent.

The world knows something of how bitter was his path. Misrepresented, scorned, his meetings broken up, many of his former friends in the opposite camp—no public man has ever faced such a blast of unpopularity and raised his head again. Some of his most intimate connections with former days could not stand the strain which his attitude to the war imposed upon them. Lossiemouth, his native place, turned him out of its golf club. On October 26th, 1914, the Executive Committee of the Leicester Liberal Association, which had hitherto maintained a friendly attitude to the senior member for the constituency, held a meeting at which the following resolution was adopted with enthusiasm:

"That this meeting of the Executive Committee of the Leicester Liberal Association desires to place on record its strong disapprobation of the attitude taken up by the senior member for Leicester—Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—in regard to Sir Edward Grey; and deprecates the effects of his utterances and writings in encouraging the enemy, dis-

couraging the response to our country's call, and creating a false impression in neutral States of Britain's part in diplomacy antecedent to the war, and feels compelled to entirely disassociate itself from his position of criticism and attack upon responsible Ministers of the Crown at this time of the country's supreme need."

That carefully worded resolution gives no hint of the sort of language which was used in the Press to describe his activities. A man, described by a London newspaper<sup>5</sup> as a "supporter politically of Mr. MacDonald," declared, as typical of what Leicester was thinking of its member, "Mr. MacDonald alone outside Germany asks the world to wait for further evidence before the gentle, inoffensive innocent is convicted. Mr. MacDonald must find another constituency. Personally, I should be glad if he would find another country. He is out of place in England. He cannot love England, or he would serve her. He neither serves nor encourages, he merely cavils."

The charge that Ramsay MacDonald "neither served nor encouraged" is a strange one to level at a man who was in constant attendance at the House of Commons. It appears to have been even less justified than ever when it is remembered that this man's intense feeling for the victims of the war caused him to go out to Belgium in the early weeks of the conflict as a volunteer member of Dr. Hector Munro's Ambulance Unit, then attached to the Belgian Army at Furnes.

Among the early members of this Red Cross Unit were Lady Dorothy Fielding, Miss May Sinclair and Mr. (now Sir) Philip Gibbs. Volunteers were sent out by a Committee working in London, and one day in the autumn of 1914 Dr. Munro received a list of newcomers on which appeared the name of "James Ramsay MacDonald."

MacDonald met Dr. Munro at Dunkirk, and together they motored to the headquarters of the Ambulance. There the doctor left him in his own quarters for the night. When he returned the following day MacDonald was not to be found, and enquiries

<sup>5</sup> *Weekly Dispatch*, July 4th, 1915.

elicited the fact that he had been arrested by the Belgian General under instructions received from the British authorities. The excuse given for this official blunder was that his passport was not in order, but the real reason was that the higher British officials on the spot—one of whom is to-day the Governor of an important State within the Empire—considered him an undesirable person to be allowed to serve on the Western Front in any capacity.

After some bargaining, Dr. Munro secured the release of the imprisoned M.P. on condition that he personally drove him to Dunkirk in his car, accompanied by a Belgian soldier as guard, and saw him on the boat for England.

There the adventure might have ended, so far as Dr. Munro was concerned. But a fortnight later General Seeley arrived at the Ambulance Headquarters and enquired for Mr. MacDonald. The General listened to Dr. Munro's story, and then explained that his instructions were that Mr. MacDonald was returning to Belgium and that he was to be conducted to any part of the front he wished to see.

MacDonald arrived at Dunkirk that day and was received, as a guest of British Headquarters, by the very officers who had two weeks before ordered his deportation as an "undesirable." Later he was received by General French at St. Omer, and visited the whole front during the Christmas of 1914.

During that fortnight in London between his two visits to Belgium, MacDonald had seen Lord Kitchener, and related to the Minister the details of his reception at Dunkirk. "K. of K." was extremely angry about the whole incident, and at once issued to him one of the red "omnibus" Passes to British Headquarters, which permitted the holder to go wherever he wanted over the whole British and French fronts.

After the incident of his arrest, MacDonald did not attempt to perform actual ambulance work in France, but he visited many of the Base hospitals, and General Seeley has since revealed that when accompanying him on one of these journeys they were subjected to heavy shell-fire. "I have to say," he added, "that no

man in a position of great danger showed more cool determination and courage than he.”<sup>6</sup>

These facts hint at the bitterness which was Ramsay MacDonald's lot at this time, but they do no more than hint. Only Mr. MacDonald could reveal the true story of what it cost him to speak the truth, as he saw it, during the years of cataclysm. It is improbable that he will ever do so. One who was close to him throughout the war period has told me that from first to last he never heard MacDonald pass one single comment upon the campaign of hatred which had turned him into an Ishmael, and even led to threats against those who dared to give him shelter. Since the war, he has often gone a hundred miles out of his way to visit friends who stood by him during the years in the shadow.

The general hostility came to a head at two famous meetings. The first was held in the Memorial Hall, London—that same hall in which he had been present at the birth of the Labor Party. The London public was determined that this “peace-at-any-price traitor” should not be heard, and Australian soldiers on leave in the capital attended in force to put that public verdict into effect. To speak that day was impossible, and MacDonald, like Lloyd George on a celebrated occasion before him, had to give up his attempt and seek safety.

The second battle was even fiercer. This was the Battle of Plumstead Common. A free-speech demonstration had been arranged by the Independent Labor Party on August 31st, 1918. MacDonald returned to London from Scotland in order to speak. On that occasion defenders and opponents in the great crowd came to blows, and MacDonald, after delivering his speech, escaped with difficulty. Stones were thrown, heads were broken, and despite his courage it was once more made obvious that this man could not rely upon a peaceful hearing in London.

At this time, when there would, perhaps, have been some excuse for rancor, MacDonald steadfastly refused to allow personal animosities to warp his judgment. A worker who was a fellow-delegate with him at a conference held when even responsible

<sup>6</sup> Speech at Southampton, April 27th, 1928.



newspapers were discussing whether he should be put "under lock and key" has placed on record an incident which throws a revealing light on Ramsay MacDonald in exile.

"I have met him," wrote this Glasgow worker, "and I know no more stable and moderating force in the contemporary Socialist movement. And he doesn't hunt popularity even in his own Party.

"Take this little incident. The Town Hall in Newcastle was crowded with delegates of the I.L.P. Annual Conference in 1916. Members of the Party who favored a strong war policy were obviously in a minority. Delegate after delegate rose and literally shouted for the heads of Henderson, Barnes, Clynes and Parker. Here was a splendid opportunity to win the approval of the crowd. The temptation to join in the clamor must have been great to any demagogue eager to lime the wings of democracy just learning to fly. But, instead of an extreme speech that would have brought the Conference to its feet in wild enthusiasm, MacDonald rose, quiet and grave, and in the measured accents of the Scot, and with relentless logic, envisioned the future when the temporary issue of the war had passed and the need for unity would be greater than ever before. 'Be fair to these men, even though you don't see eye to eye with them,' was the gist of the speech.

"It needed moral courage to take that line, but MacDonald has never been afraid to do the right thing even though it meant unpopularity."

As the war proceeded along its appointed course, and the nation made sacrifice after sacrifice in its united effort for victory, hatred developed into persecution.

Fresh fuel was added to the campaign against him when there appeared in the British newspapers a translation, afterwards stated by Mr. MacDonald to be "accurate enough," of a contribution which he sent to a symposium in the International review *Les Documents du Progrès*, published at Lausanne, touching upon German atrocities and the use which was being made of them for propaganda purposes.<sup>7</sup>

"In my opinion, the use which is being made of the stories of 'atrocities by the enemy' is, in the highest degree, reprehensible. In the first

<sup>7</sup> Written in January 1915 before the publication of the Bryce Report on the German Atrocities in Belgium.

place, the proofs accepted by the Belgian and French Commission are not, in my opinion, real proofs. In the midst of all these horrible experiences, their nerves shattered, and all power of precise and accurate observation completely destroyed, it is quite impossible for these unfortunate people to say exactly what happened. A horrible death becomes an atrocity, and imagination takes the place of observation. I am quite convinced that my own evidence would not be worthy of belief if I had passed through all the terrible things these unhappy people have suffered. My depositions would only represent the impression which the horrors had made upon my mentality.

"In England we have discovered many cases which at first appeared to be absolutely proved, and which afterwards turned out to be pure inventions, or at least were satisfactorily explained. We have learned no longer to accept evidence apparently most worthy of belief. I cannot understand how the Belgian and French judicial authorities (and even, I suppose, before long, English authorities) could have put their signatures to such reports on 'atrocities,' prepared under conditions which an ordinary police-court would not admit.

"That there have been atrocities and brutalities goes without saying. That the German Army is responsible for most of these acts is also certain; partly for the simple reason that it has been operating in an enemy country. Such excesses have always been associated with war, and have been charged against all invading armies. But it is detestable and diabolical to make use of such stories in order to excite hatred among the peoples, and in order to cause the continuance of the war. Such action deserves the disapproval of every upright man and every honest woman.

Speaking at a meeting of the Union of Democratic Control, held at Birmingham in June 1915, he justified his many pleas for sane thought about the great issues at stake in the following words: "He was perfectly convinced that people would return to the pacific faith, that through the dark and shadowy ways of sorrow men and women would return to that overwhelming desire to live at peace and in happiness with their neighbors. The poor women and children who have lost their husbands and fathers would perhaps one day go with the German women and children who had lost their husbands and their fathers, and stand side by

side and hand in hand in the common graveyard of those good men who slept the eternal sleep. If anything he had said would make that easy, if he had ever been associated with men whose work would make that easy, nothing, not even death itself, could deprive him of the great pleasure and the great honor he should feel in having made that contribution to his country and to the goodwill of Europe."

The proposal, first mooted by Lloyd George, the Minister for Munitions, that industrial conscription should be introduced in order to place the Government in complete control of the labor power of Great Britain, was fiercely opposed by MacDonald. Speaking at Leicester on November 15th, 1915, he declared that if the country tolerated conscription in any form the maintenance of democratic liberties would be endangered.

"I do not oppose conscription because I have any theories about the war," he stated, "but because I am convinced that if you allow conscription to be established in this country it would revolutionize the whole spirit of the country, and change every characteristic which has made the country honorable and pleasant to reside in. Conscription means that everybody will be a potential soldier, and if any trouble arises the Government can change you from civilians into soldiers, making you do as soldiers what you refuse to do as civilians. There was a great deal in a record. You know how I have been criticized by certain people who want to make political hay while the sun shines—and therefore you will understand something of the contempt which I have for what they do.

"Who are the leaders of the conscriptive movement? They are the men who have been the bitterest enemies of trades unionism. Are we going to treat that fact as though it has no bearing upon the question? If so, then you are far more short-sighted in 1915 than you have been all the years that I have known you. As long as people can offer or withhold their labor you would be in a position to enter into a conflict with capital when capital provoked the conflict, but if you would not be able to do it, you are deprived of your industrial freedom."

After denouncing the Government for not proposing the conscription of wealth, the speaker went on to say that the invasion

of Belgium was not the cause of the war. It was the result. "Sir Edward Grey says the invasion was not the determining factor, but it was an important one. If I have said anything that could be quoted wrongly or maliciously in regard to the origin of the war it was because my mind has been clear from the outbreak of the war that the people of this country went into the war because of its immediate consequences, and not because of the causes which preceded it. It was because of their idealism, their desire to stand by honor and freedom that stirred them, because they began their war history, not in 1911 or 1912, but at the moment when the German soldiers crossed the frontier of Belgium—that was why their heart was pure and their hands clean. When they remembered the outraged Belgium woman, he asked them to occasionally remember the fight they had in the days of peace for the woman walking the streets in Piccadilly. The horror, sin and evil walking about the fields in a dramatic way struck their imagination with its horribleness, but he wanted them to remember that in the days of peace, if in a less dramatic way, there were in their midst every hour of the day women who were weeping and heartbroken because men had been cruel to them. When the war was over he hoped they would gird themselves and fight once more the battle of human emancipation with which the name and history of the Labor Party was so honorably associated."

During this time, when even those who admitted that they knew Ramsay MacDonald could not escape a measure of social ostracism, he retained his official connection with the Labor Party as the Treasurer of the body which he had fashioned in its earliest days. It is one of the paradoxes of politics that while the reigning Labor leaders were members of the Coalition Government, and separated from their ex-Chairman by so wide a gulf, MacDonald maintained his position with the rank and file of both the Trade Unions and Labor Party throughout the dark years. One cannot help feeling, in this connection, that some of the cruder forms of misrepresentation which he endured only served to arouse sympathy for the intended victim among the men who, many of them,



could recall the days when calumny had been the chief weapon employed by their opponents against the legitimate aspirations of the Trade Unions themselves.

When, at the very height of the Press campaign against him, he attended the Trade Union Congress held at Bristol in 1915, as a fraternal delegate from the Labor Party, a Conservative newspaper remarked, the next day, "Seldom, surely, can any speaker at Congress have had a warmer or more rousing reception than greeted Mr. Ramsay MacDonald when he arose to address the assemblage," and the same report went on to describe the "fervid, almost frantic" enthusiasm with which his speech was greeted.

His address was an astute plea for the need of unity in the ranks of Labor in order to keep the Party strong and prepared for what would happen after the war. In other words, it was an able appeal that the differences aroused by the war should not interfere with the real work which the Labor Party had been created to perform.

"The great combination of Socialism and Labor must be maintained to fight the great battles that combined Labor will have to face when peace comes. I venture to say that the facts are so plain, the need so pressing, the common sense so apparent, that this Congress, whatever its views may be about myself, and my colleagues—for the moment—that this Congress will never lose sight of the fact that behind and beyond war comes peace, and when that peace comes you will be back on your old fields, back to your old controversies, back opposing your old enemies, back to your old ideals, back to your old demands, and that faced with those responsibilities, you will be back to your old friends, back to your old Party and enthusiasm which gives you so much power. That sagacity which built up the Party will once more unite us together, and give us that energy and that enthusiasm which will make our hard road light, our long way short, and our difficulties disappear because we are perfectly convinced that united Labor is behind us and United Labor in its might, in its self-respect, is always ready to fight a successful battle."

In August 1915 his task was made harder and his path lonelier by the death of Keir Hardie. The Pioneer of Labor, and the first

really independent Labor member to sit in the House of Commons, died of a broken heart. "When he returned from his first meeting in his constituency on the outbreak of war," MacDonald has written, "he was a crushed man, and sitting in the sun on the Terrace of the House of Commons where I came across him, he seemed to be looking out on a blank desolation. From that he never recovered. Then followed the complete mergence of the Labor Party in the war-lusty crowd. The Independent Labor Party kept as trusty as ever, but he felt that his work was over, that all he could do in his lifetime was to amount to no more than picking up some of the broken spars of wreckage."

The war-mind, the cloud of lies and misrepresentations which had engulfed those who thought with him, the submerging of the International Socialist movement in the swirling maelstrom of strife, and, above all, the attitude of old colleagues, proved a deadly blow to "the gentle seer" who had fought all his life for the enthronement of reason, and the caging of the baser instincts of mankind.

His death was a great loss to the Labor Movement—how great a loss was not fully realized, except by the few, amid the complexities of the time.

Writing later, Mr. MacDonald paid tribute to his old chief: "Every one who came in contact with Hardie felt his personality right away at the outset. His power never lay in his being at the head of a political organization which he commanded, for the organization of the Independent Labor Party was always weak compared with its influence, and he had ceased to be an official of the miners before their combination became really formidable; nor did it lie in his ability to sway the crowd by divine gifts of speech and appeal, for his diction though beautifully simple was rarely tempestuous, and his voice had few of the qualities that steal into the hearts of men and stir them in their heights and depths; more certainly still he never secured a follower by flattery nor won the ear of the crowd by playing down to it. He set a hard task before his people, and gave them great ends to pursue. He left no man in peace in the valley gutter, but

winded them on the mountain tracks. What then was the secret of the man? I who have seen him in all relationships, at the height of triumph and the depths of humiliation, on the platform and at the fireside, dignified among strangers and merry amongst friends, generally fighting by his side but sometimes in conflict with him, regard that secret as first of all his personality and then his proud esteem for the common folk and his utter blindness to all the decorations of humanity. He was a simple man, a strong man, a gritty man.”<sup>8</sup>

The death of Hardie placed even greater responsibilities upon the shoulders of his natural successor. From that time to MacDonald, almost unaided, fell the supreme task of making vocal the ideals for which Hardie had lived.

It would be unfair to suggest, however, that his activities were confined to criticism. On the contrary, from the firing of the first shot, he was looking ahead to the crucial test which would come with the making of peace. If he condemned the foreign policy of Britain in the years before the war, it was—rightly or wrongly—because he wanted to see the peace of Europe resting on a surer foundation than the old system of alliances and armaments.

Where the abuse to which he was subjected was not based upon the simple fact that he was a Pacifist, its roots were found in his refusal to regard war-fever as a substitute for argument and sane thinking. Throughout the conflict, MacDonald ignored the passions of the moment and strove to take a detached view of the problems which were awaiting solution. And in no respect was this so true as in his attitude to Socialism after the war, and the making of peace.

Writing in April 1916 he warned Socialists of the problems which would await them at the end of the conflict.

“All the old problems of Socialism will arise in more exaggerated forms and all the old quacks from the Tariff Reformer to the thrift advocate will be selling pills in the market-place. Private capitalism will strive to regain what it has had to surrender owing to the war-

<sup>8</sup> Foreword to *Life of Keir Hardie*, by W. Stewart. (Cassell.)

pressure—like the railways—and will determine to keep what ought to have been taken from it—like the mines and the ships. Reaction will be in the saddle. The appeal for sacrifice to defend the country will be continued in the form of an appeal for sacrifice to put the country on its legs. This will be favored by the enmity which will survive the war, and which will induce impulsive and ignorant men to favor economic policies which in calmer moods they would reject. Against Labor demanding justice under such circumstances will be ranged a solid phalanx of the bourgeoisie, badly hit themselves by the war and struggling to recoup their losses; and a larger section than ever of the public Press will be hostile.

“On the other hand, the rank and file, having been genuinely misled by will-o’-the-wisps and false sentiment will be untrammelled when the time for agitation comes. When it finds it has not destroyed militarism, that ‘national unity’ has destroyed no conflicting interest within the nation itself, that the country for which it fought belongs to it less than ever, there will be bitterness in the conflict more severe than any we have known. The Christianity which the parsons tell us is being taught in the trenches will, at any rate, not be of the passive-resistance order. Those who like to think of the class war will be filled to their hearts’ content.

“Before the war Socialism had gone some way in disentangling its problems; after the war it will have to start afresh—but start not with a score or two of men but with hundreds of thousands. It will be like a man who has been hewing his way through a forest who has had to give up working for a time, and who returns to meet a wider entanglement than ever.

“A new vigor is being put into the question ‘To whom does the country really belong?’ A new aspect has been put upon Trade Unionism as a factor in politics. The introduction of women and unskilled labor into trades hitherto almost barred against them gives industrial unionism a new meaning. The experience of the war when private enterprise broke down so completely both in its efficiency and its honor gives Socialism new claims. The impotence of every one except those who retained the International mind to see the drift of events or to offer any solution of the war muddle gives Internationalism a new authority.

“The Socialist after the war is to be on no bed of ease and live in no world which has no need of him. Never could we have said with more



confidence and more meaning than now, 'Wage-earners of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains.'"<sup>9</sup>

That article might very well have been written in 1925, as a review of what had happened during the seven years that followed the signing of the Armistice. It reveals more surely than any other quotation I can give how clearly Ramsay MacDonald envisaged the problems which peace would bring.

In pleading for a just peace, both in the House of Commons and in the country, MacDonald was equally emphatic about the dangers ahead.

One of the most important speeches which he delivered during the middle phase of the war, was made in the House on May 24th, 1916, during the Debate upon a Supplementary Vote of Credit, a debate which permitted him to make a general survey of the war and all the problems arising out of the conflict. MacDonald used the opportunity to redefine his views with regard to both the war and the peace which would have to be made at the close of hostilities in a speech which, for lucidity and power, was equal to any that he made at that time.

"There is nothing that is more melancholy to look back over," he said, "than the history of past wars. How often it is that we have had to pay homage of pride to the magnificent spirit of the people when war broke out. We have always to pay our homage with gratitude, to the men who have offered themselves, and sacrificed themselves to our national security. But those feelings of ours, as a rule hitherto, have had to be mingled with sorrow that, after our people had made the supreme sacrifice, our statesmen have failed to carry out the moral purposes and the high ideals for which the war stood. That is what has happened over and over again. I want to say this afternoon, and that is why I rise in this House, that the Government must remember that national duty is not confined to the raising of armies, is not confined to the vote of money wherewith to supply the armies which you

<sup>9</sup> "Socialism after the War," by J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., *Herald*, April 29th, 1916.

enroll, but to apply diplomatic skill and political capacity in such a way that the supreme sacrifice offered by our armies shall achieve a permanent result in the establishment of a Peace that has not been established hitherto."

After appealing to the Government to announce clearly what Britain was fighting for, the speaker continued, "I say unhesitatingly—I say perfectly definitely—that this country, if it retains any shred of honor at all, cannot accept a peace, unless peace is forced upon it, which means the sacrifice of Belgium Sovereignty to any extent. If Germany imagines that there is any section of this country that is prepared to accept a peace at the sacrifice of any portion—and I emphasize this—not merely of Belgium Sovereignty, but of any portion of it, then the sooner German public opinion is disabused of that delusion the better. The same is true regarding France, so far as France has been invaded. Let us be perfectly clear about that."

Turning to the question of the minorities living under foreign domination in Europe, MacDonald declared: "There should be a settlement of the disturbing influences in Europe of nationalities which are unhappy or restive under foreign yokes. You can vote your three hundred million pounds as often as you like, and you can sacrifice the best lives you have got, and the highest and most noble-minded youth in this land, and you can send them out, but if you do not settle the problems of nationality in Europe, then you are going to come home empty-handed after your great sacrifices."

After referring to the necessity for settling the problem of the Balkans by conference rather than fighting ("You cannot hope to settle them if you take this extraordinary miscellany of creeds and races, if there is a vanquished at one end and a conqueror at another, and if you merely distribute them according to political conveniences, for in that way you will settle nothing at all"), the speaker turned to the question of what, in his opinion, should be the supreme war aim of the Allies.

"This war ought to end in the destruction of militarism in Europe. How are you going to do it? Quite honestly, that is

where some of us disagree. I agree again with the very remarkably bold statement made by Lord Cromer, where he said, in dealing with this very point, 'There can be no prospect of a durable peace so long as uncontrolled Junkerdom reigns supreme in Germany.' I only wish my Socialist friends in Germany had been wise enough to have settled that problem long ago, as they could have done. However, it is a political problem, and not a military one. If the Hon. Gentlemen agree with me in that, they must also agree with Lord Cromer in his deduction when he says, 'Any change in the direction of bringing Junkerdom under Executive control must be the work of the Germans themselves.' That is a hard statement to make, but those of us who know Germany know perfectly well that that is the only way to settle the problem. You cannot impose upon Germany any political rule to suit yourselves. It would not accept it.

"If you use your Army and your Navy only, you will never get a peace at all," MacDonald warned the House. "I am referred to sometimes by people who are extraordinarily misinformed, not to say ignorant, as being a peace-at-any-price man. I do not understand the expression. I do not know what it means. But what happens? The people who are always talking about the Army and the Navy only as an engine of peace are the peace-at-any-price people, because they never have secured a peace. No army can—happily it never can—secure a peace in that way."

Ramsay MacDonald ended this speech with a peroration that must have touched the hearts of many of his listeners, and for a moment tempted them to forget the unpopularity of the speaker:

"We, the people, are in the middle of a tremendous storm, and are blown about by it. We poor private individuals huddle ourselves into a corner of the State, waiting for the storm to blow past, when the real intentions on both sides will have a chance of showing and expressing themselves. Therefore, from the point of view of neutrals, from the point of view of shortening the war, of minimizing sacrifices and of making peace, not only an honorable, but a lasting one, from the point of view of the whole of Europe, I beg the Right Hon. Gentleman to go on with his diplomacy, with his statements—which are negotiations,

whether he gives them that word or not—to go on remembering that this problem is not merely to lift up our hearts, but to enlighten the minds of our enemies. With our hearts uplifted and our enemies' minds enlightened, I am perfectly certain that this war will eventuate in a demand for peace which will not be broken again—a demand for a peace which will be established upon the common agreements of the peoples, and which, therefore, will never be assailed in the history of mankind."

The policy which he pleaded for on the floor of the House of Commons, he also urged upon the electorate at his meetings in the country.

"Peace cannot be made by old methods which have failed in the past," he declared at Birmingham on September 3rd, 1916, "and we cannot finish the war until the peoples of Europe are willing to look each other in the face and shake hands; that will come a little later."

Prophetic words! For the first time the representatives of Germany and France were to shake hands again was to be at the end of the famous London Conference over which Ramsay MacDonald presided in 1924 as both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Great Britain.

Again, at Dundee in June 1916, he declared: "If you imagine that you are going to bring peace in Europe by the sword, and by the sword alone—by conquering a nation—then you are wrong. Because it has never been done yet and we cannot do it now. If you imagine that peace rests upon force, then we have gone far astray in our wanderings after peace."

At a great meeting at Oldham on October 28th, 1916, Ramsay MacDonald was the chief speaker and "not a single interruption took place."

Speaking of the outbreak of war, he said: "When a nation was threatened something instinctive in every man and woman in the nation made them stand by their nation. England was not merely a little patch of red on a map of the world, but it was something like a personnel, that had grown through generations and centuries, so that the English man or woman was something that had a rich past, a hopeful present and an enticing future. All these



things came into the minds of the people at the moment of war and made them forget all differences and principles and fight, almost blindly, for national existence and nationality itself. That was the instinctive emotion of the moment."

After alluding to the attitude of the Independent Labor Party to the conflict, he added that he did not consider that they were in a position to come to a final judgment on the subject. "They would not be in that position until after the war was over, when they could sit down and ascertain and assimilate the facts. The origin of the war would not become a subject of real consideration even by university professors until the war was passed over and calm had been restored in the public mind."

The national impatience with the Pacifist group led to police action being taken against some of MacDonald's supporters. By 1916 the Independent Labor Party and other Socialist organizations were complaining bitterly of the seizure of pamphlets and the raiding of their headquarters. This police activity culminated on August 18th, 1916, in a raid of the headquarters offices of the I.L.P. in London, followed by a prosecution which came before Sir John Knill at the Mansion House Police Court. The Independent Labor Party lost their case, and further prosecutions caused Mr. MacDonald to raise the matter in the House of Commons.

After pointing out that among the pamphlets seized by the police was one reproducing a speech which Mr. Snowden had delivered in the House of Commons on the Finance Bill, issued under the title of *Who is to pay for the War?*, and another, a small sheet of hymns (some of them from *Hymns Ancient and Modern*), sung at Socialist meetings on Sunday afternoons and evenings, MacDonald declared: "If the Rt. Hon. Gentleman or the Government think that this is the way to help the nation, they are very much mistaken. If there is a body of people in this country that quite honestly think it their duty to put forward certain views before the people of the country they are not doing so for the purpose of weakening the country; they are not doing so from any motive with which any member of the Government



RAMSAY MacDONALD WITH HIS CHILDREN, MALCOLM AND ISH-BEL, WHO WERE LEFT MOTHERLESS AT AN EARLY AGE



has a right to quarrel, or from any motive that is not quite as good as any that animates members of the Cabinet itself. Those views will be put before the country—must be put before the country. By putting those views before the country the Government itself will be helped, and, what is still more important, the nation will be helped so that when the time comes to devise peace, that peace will show more sagacity than the conduct of the war has done. That will be done. The Rt. Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Herbert Samuel) may put his policemen upon us. He would be wise if he did not. He ought to put us—I talk with the greatest friendliness to the Government—upon our honor. That is far more effective to appeal to us to defend the best interests of the country than any force he can use. He can use his force. His force will fail. He can forfeit our help. He can bring us before his Sir John Knills, but I can assure him he will not attain the object which I am perfectly certain he hopes to attain.”

As the war pursued its terrible course, and the months passed without any sure signs that the deadlock on the Western Front would be broken before attrition made some sort of peace imperative, MacDonald redoubled his efforts to pave the way for a just settlement and to expose the dangers of a peace of conquest.

“The question is, what is to be the Europe of the future?” he asked the House of Commons.<sup>10</sup> “I do not mean the military position; I mean the political one. War is not merely a military affair, war is also a political affair. Clausewitz lays it down so clearly in his great book on War, ‘The results of war are politics,’ and unless we are bending our energies and turning our attention to the political aftermath of the war, then we are not in a position to use the opportunities a successful war presents to us. Are we to go on gambling so far as our Gallipoli and such expeditions are concerned? I say it is the absolute duty of this House to see to it that not a single soldier’s life is going to be sacrificed in vain. I refer to those men whose magnificent courage has only been equaled by their good-humor, and whose capacity to undergo sacrifice must have harried the hearts of all right-thinking men

<sup>10</sup> February 12th, 1917.



who have read of the trials and difficulties through which those men have come. And I say that those who sit comfortably at home, enjoying all the privileges of home life, have the responsibility of seeing to it that those men are not unnecessarily exposed to danger and to risk, and that we ought to do everything we possibly can in support of them.

"Now I am one of those who never resisted the argument," continued MacDonald, "that this war ought to result—and, in fact, I may say, it must result, if we are wise, and if the nations of Europe are wise—in a complete removal of those conditions from which wars in previous generations have come. If this is not going to be the last war, then this war is going to be a failure. If this war is not going to leave Europe in such a frame of mind that we can steadily reduce the cost of armaments upon the taxpayer, then this war has not brought the result which millions of men who accepted it believed it would bring. Therefore, never having resisted that at all—always having been quite prepared to do what is necessary to bring about that end, at the same time I have doubted very much whether the means adopted were going to secure that end. Take, for instance, one cry, 'A fight to a finish!' If that is inevitable, it must be done, there need be no quibble about that. I am not trying to evade that issue. If the fight to a military finish is absolutely necessary in order to secure the political and moral results which we have put before us as the end of this war, then we cannot help it. It must be done. But I do not believe it is."

At Swansea in May 1917, shortly after the Russian Revolution, he referred to the same vital question. "I am not a pro-German; I am a pro-European, a pro-democrat and a pro-internationalist, and I never want to be anything else. I want not a patched-up peace, a miserable peace which would not stand the strain of six years in the Courts of Europe, but a peace which would never be broken because it would be established on the foundation of a free democracy, no longer to be assailed by kings, emperors, diplomats or the military classes."

In the same speech he laid it down that his activities were dic-

tated by a single desire—"that when peace came it would be a peace to secure freedom, nationality, self-government, independence, and, above all, a peace that would secure future peace to the riven, devastated and sorrow-stricken peoples of Europe."

"We want the Government to define its aims. We want it to make its conception of the conditions under which it is prepared to negotiate clear to itself, to the country and to the whole of Europe. We do not want it to drift. We do not want it to extend its aims when it appears to be winning, and diminish them when it becomes depressed, and appears to be losing—that is all. We want the Government to make it perfectly clear to the Allies with whom it is cooperating, and to the enemy with whom it is fighting, that we have a definite war aim, and that the success or failure of the war will depend on how far that war aim can be carried out.

"The country is threatened by two dangers. The first is that it may make peace on account of war weariness. Nothing can be more fatal than that peace should be made because this country is war weary. That means you will not obtain your object at all. A man who runs a race to obtain a prize, and who sits down on the course half-way to the goal, has not only lost, but has lost very badly. This country must not be allowed to make peace on account of war weariness. There is another danger when a country goes in for war—it finds that the mists gather about it, that passion grows, that new objects come in the way, that needy Allies bring pressure to bear upon it, that aims it never dreamt of during the first six months of the war begin to be pressed upon it, and, almost unconsciously and without knowing what it is doing, it accepts them. A country at war runs the grave risk of losing its sense of direction. In carrying on the war it loses itself in the contest. That must be prevented if we can possibly prevent it. What is going to prevent it? There is only one thing—that the country should lay down quite clearly what its war aims are, and make its war aims real war aims and not peace aims, stick to them and stand by them. Then there will be no war weariness, because your people will go to the goal. Then there

will be no losing the war, because your aims will always be enlightening your path and showing precisely what the goal is and where it is.

"What were our original objects?" Mr. MacDonald continued. "Belgium! Yes, Belgium must be liberated, and there can be no peace in Europe if the independence of Belgium is in doubt for one single moment. Let there be no mistake about it. That is not all. The Cabinet ought to make a declaration that the apparent gains which the exercise of brute force have given cannot remain in the possession of those who exercised that brute force. That is not all. We had another aim when we went into this war. At any rate, it appeared very early on. We want to guarantee in future that this sort of thing is not going to happen again, and we want that guarantee to be a good one. What is that guarantee? I think it is double. First of all we must get democracy established in the important Powers of Europe. The internal government of those Powers must be of such a nature as to give a democratic country some guarantee that its democratic feelings are sympathetically received and listened to in the capitals of those Great Powers.

"If the Government would declare those aims, we would all know precisely where we are, what we are fighting for, and what we are driving at, and it is just as important that the enemy should know it as that we ourselves should know it."

Mr. MacDonald summed up his views in these words: "We want to state once again our aims, and we want to draw clearly a line of distinction between war aims and peace aims. We must not include in our war program all the liberations which, as democrats, we should like to see in Europe. We must make it perfectly clear that at a Peace Conference we are to stand for liberation, but that the liberation which is our war aim is only that liberation which has been taken away since the war started. We ought to declare our immediate allegiance to the League of Nations, and we ought to define the spirit of the League of Nations in a liberal way. We want no more holy alliances in the shape of a League of Nations. This League of Nations ought not to be,

and must not be, a League of Governments of Nations. It must be a League of the Democratic Organization of Parliaments, and be representative of the popular opinion of nations."

Many more quotations from his speeches, all revealing the same earnest desire for "diplomacy, negotiation, the Round Table," when the time for making Peace came, might be quoted, but those already given are sufficient evidence of the fact that MacDonald was more consistent in his views than were some of his attackers. The reasons which caused him repeatedly to warn the nation against the foreign policy of Britain in the years before the war, were the reasons which made him oppose many of the actions of our Governments during the conflict. Whatever opinions may be held about his activities, no one who has examined the facts can deny that what he said during the war was the logical outcome of what he said before the murder of Sarajevo plunged Europe into upheaval.

"Neither defeat nor surrender is in my vocabulary," he declared in the course of a dramatic speech in the House of Commons on June 20th, 1918. "The real Defeatists are the people who are pursuing that which every war has shown to be illusory. They, not we, trust in the old policy which is going to make war in Europe ceaseless by this war ending in a heritage of war. That is defeat. Let us in these matters be perfectly candid. If the policy which certain Hon. Members are pursuing is followed, Europe will never be free from war. And when you end a war, whether it be Germany against France, or whatever the war may be, and if five days after you begin to arm again for the next struggle, then, I say, tell that honestly to the people, and do not allow the people to believe that we are engaging in a war for the purpose of ending all wars.

"I am in the war for the purpose of ending all war. Because that is so, I say you will have to adopt a method which the history of Europe shows has never been adopted before, because if you go on the old lines you will fulfil the old ends and nothing else. Therefore, I appeal to the Government to bring freshness of mind to these problems of diplomacy.



"One thing we hope will happen as a result of this war," he added, "is that the moment a truce comes, the moment this tremendous war momentum which is pushing us ahead against our own will, has stopped, and we can face the problems about us, at that moment the people of Europe will come together, and in their enthusiasm and sorrow and pain and suffering, will there and then, on the spot, before the experience has gone out of their minds, create something which will make it impossible for such a state of affairs ever to take place again. To do that we must have liberation, but it is not coming from the battles. There may be some battles to give the opportunity for liberation, but the liberation is only going to come at the Peace Table."

Throughout the conflict the campaign of hate against him continued. But however fierce the opposition—some of which may have been justified, but much of which is best forgotten—MacDonald was never intimidated.

The years in exile aged him. His hair whitened with the strain, but his spirit did not break. Without expressing any view on the opinions which he held, I believe that when the historian of the future sits down to assess his career and to write his story, in it will be found a tribute to the dauntless courage revealed during those dark years of adversity, without which he could not have reached the daylight on the other side.

Already, indeed, the clouds were lightening. When at the 1917 Conference, after he had been refused a passport for the Stockholm Conference and the Seamen's Union had prevented him from sailing, MacDonald addressed the Party, his popularity was clearly growing, and he aroused something of the enthusiasm of pre-war days. And at an Albert Hall meeting, when it was still unsafe to put his name on a poster, railwaymen present shouted for "Ramsay," and would not be satisfied until their old idol had spoken.

Before discussing the Armistice, and repercussions which the cessation of hostilities had upon political events in Britain, it should be pointed out that, although the problems of war and peace overshadowed all MacDonald's other activities during these

years, and have accordingly been dealt with at length in this chapter, many other questions engaged his attention. Ramsay MacDonald, from 1914 until the end of the war, fought, almost alone and by every means in his power, against those restrictions upon liberty of thought and action which were, step by step, introduced by the Government as the war proceeded. Particularly was he the mouthpiece of all those who believed that "freedom of conscience" was being violated by the methods used in administering the Conscription Acts, and by some of the decisions of the Tribunals. Later, he took up the cases of unfit men who had been passed by medical boards as fit, and of conscientious objectors who, in defiance of the declared will of Parliament, had been imprisoned for their opinions.

There was little enough that he, or any one else, could do at that time to maintain liberties formerly regarded as unassailable, but at least MacDonald kept the ideals of a free State before him, and never permitted a wrong to go unchallenged.

One other question which came before the House of Commons in 1917 should also be mentioned, if only because it concerns a reform which is still being discussed. This was the problem of electoral reform raised by the decision to give the vote to women of over thirty years of age, and by other suggested electoral changes which were eventually incorporated in the Representation of the People Act of 1918.

During the early debates upon this subject, proposals that Proportional Representation should be incorporated in the Government Bill were made, and MacDonald placed upon record his views towards this system of voting in the sentence: "If I have the chance I shall vote against Proportional Representation."

"I do not know of any one who is going to speak on behalf of Proportional Representation to-night," he said in the course of a speech in the House, "but if there is, I would like to put a question to him. Proportional Representation has been tried for some time in a good many places. Will they tell us, in respect of any country, where the great, able politician has been saved by Proportional Representation, or sacrificed by the electoral

methods that preceded it? As a matter of fact, any one who takes the trouble to scrutinize list after list of Proportional Representation results in Belgium, Tasmania, and so on, will find there was not, so far as I know, and I took great pains to find out, one single instance of a strong, capable politician owing his seat, his success in election, to the operation of Proportional Representation.

"The working out of Proportional Representation in the way that the advocates of Proportional Representation would like," continued Mr. MacDonald, "is a negation of the representative system. It is a most absurd idea of representation. The present method, at any rate, compels candidates, whilst they are still candidates, to declare where their cohesion is, who are their colleagues, and what Party they have got to work with. So that, on the whole, the majority in this House, is a representative majority and not a scratch majority."<sup>11</sup>

That speech is of importance, if only because of the evidence it affords of the fact that Ramsay MacDonald's opposition to Proportional Representation is not dictated by political expediency, or any calculation that during recent appeals to the country the "gamble" of the three-party system has worked in favor of the Labor Party, but upon a considered opinion—which may be right or wrong—of what is best in national interests arrived at after a careful study of the subject.<sup>12</sup>

The approach of the Armistice, and the extension of the franchise shortly before that event, giving the vote to all males at

<sup>11</sup> May 22nd, 1917.

<sup>12</sup> Mr. MacDonald expressed the same view in his book *The Socialist Movement*, published before the war, when he stated: "Proportional Representation adds greatly to the expense of elections, offers increased opportunities for the manipulating caucus managers, make majorities and governments more dependent upon stray odd men in the legislature, and returns to Parliament a greater number of men than are there now whose votes represent no opinion and carry out no mandate because so many will be returned on single issues—e.g., Temperance—but will have to vote on every question that comes before Parliament. The Socialist knows that democracy in government can be secured only by an efficiently working machine and not by an elaborate set of paper perfections of beautiful but intangible delicacy."

twenty-one without qualification, and to women at thirty, marked the beginning of a new chapter in the story of Labor's rise to power, and necessitated a reconsideration of outlook on the part of its leaders.

Conscious of both the need and the approaching opportunity, the Party in 1918 came to two decisions aimed at strengthening its appeal to the masses and consolidating the impetus which war-time measures of State control had given to Socialist thought. Capitalism had openly broken down under the strain of the war emergency, and the workers had glimpsed the possibilities of public ownership. The moral was obvious—Labor must at once stand forth as a completely Socialist Party, and, further, must open its ranks to the direct recruitment of individual members who had formerly, in order to qualify for membership, to join one of the affiliated bodies—in the case of sympathizers in the upper and middle classes, the Independent Labor Party or Fabian Society.

On February 26th, 1918, therefore, at a Party Conference held in London, the Constitution was amended, and Socialism, as an alternative to Capitalism, became one of the declared aims of the whole Party for the first time.<sup>13</sup>

The wording of this momentous clause in the revised Constitution was as follows:

"To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof as may be possible, upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry and service.

"Generally to promote the political, social and economic emancipa-

<sup>13</sup> At the Annual Conference held at Liverpool in 1905 a Resolution had been passed committing the Party to Socialism as an "ultimate object"; in 1904 Labor had joined the Socialist International and been represented at the Amsterdam meeting of that year. So much the convinced Socialists within its ranks had accomplished, but it was not until 1918 that Socialism became the economic basis of the Party and was included in the Constitution to which every member was required to subscribe as a test of his faith. Prior to the war most, but not all, of the Party's M.P.'s had been convinced Socialists.



tion of the people, and more particularly of those who depend directly upon their own exertions by hand or brain for the means of life."

With the second decision implied in the amended Constitution—the admission to membership of all who "produce by hand or brain"—the "black-coated" workers who belonged to no Trade Union became eligible for direct membership of the Party, and the monopoly of these "intellectuals" hitherto enjoyed by the Independent Labor Party came to an end.

It is probable that those controlling the Party foresaw this consequence of what was an inevitable final step along the road to a fully national Party, directly representative of all classes. No doubt they realized that "the extreme wartime pacifism of the I.L.P. made it desirable that this monopoly should be broken and direct approach to the Labor Party given those who disapproved of the I.L.P. attitude."<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the considerations which decided this step, the effect was to rob the Independent Labor Party of one of the last excuses for its existence as a "Party within a Party," and the coolness which has characterized the pronouncements of the I.L.P. towards the larger body dates from this time.

Having thus modernized its organization and adopted Socialism as a definite basis of membership, the Party proceeded to prepare its first considered program. Discussed at the Conference held in 1918, this was later issued under the title, "Labor and the New Social Order."

This pronouncement crystallized into a single program all the hopes of a better world aroused by the war. It is too long to quote here, but its domestic provisions were tabulated under four main heads—(1) the Universal Enforcement of a National Minimum, (2) the Democratic Control of Industry, (3) the revision of National Finance, including reform of Income Tax, Taxation of Land Values, increased Death Duties and Capital Levy, and (4) the reservation of the nation's surplus wealth for the common good. This last to be secured by nationalization of the means of

<sup>14</sup> *Portrait of the Labor Party*, by Egon Wertheimer, p. 52. Putnam, 1929.

production and distribution on the one hand, and by increased taxation of riches on the other.<sup>15</sup>

In the preamble to "Labor and the New Social Order," Labor expressed the view that the Capitalist system, "with its reckless profiteering and wage slavery, with its glorification of the unhampered struggle for the means of life, and its hypocritical defense of the 'survival of the fittest,' with the monstrous inequality of circumstances which it produces, and the degradation and brutalization, both moral and spiritual, resulting therefrom, may, we hope, indeed have received a death-blow. With it must go the political system and ideas in which it naturally found expression. We of the Labor Party, whether in opposition or called upon in due time to form an administration, will certainly lend no hand to its revival. On the contrary, we shall do our utmost to see that it is buried with the millions it has done to death."

With something approaching universal adult suffrage achieved, with a program that undoubtedly stirred minds clutching at any creed which promised a bulwark against a repetition of the suffering and waste of war, with Socialism inscribed on its banners—at long last an asset to be flaunted rather than a revolutionary proposal from which all but the most rabid partisans recoiled with misgiving—Labor prepared to wage the battle which would determine its place as a political force in the post-war world.

Karl Marx was forgotten, or at least never mentioned. The Labor Party had adopted a distinctively British brand of Socialism, and approved a program which revealed, in every line, con-

<sup>15</sup> "Labor and the New Social Order" was rather more advanced as a program than "Labor and the Nation," issued ten years later and still in force. In the latter document some of the earlier proposals are dropped or relegated to a minor position among Labor's aims, while in regard to others the note of urgency is missing. These changes can probably be traced to the rise of the Labor Party to the position of alternative Government and its brief period in office, between the two dates. On the other hand, certain proposals, such as that for the State control of credit and the conversion of the Bank of England into a public corporation, appear in "Labor and the Nation" for the first time. Problems connected with sex, marriage laws and religion, which find a place in the programs of the Continental Socialist Parties, are not mentioned in the British program.

cessions to the native preference for practical, attainable reforms rather than for dogma or theory. A handful, among them the pioneers of the Marxian Social Democratic Federation, compared "Labor and the New Social Order" with the Communist Manifesto drawn up by Karl Marx and sighed for the theoretical arguments upon which rest the programs of the Continental Socialist Parties; the great mass of the workers accepted it without reserve as a program which went as far as it would be either wise or possible to go.

A further decision, reached later in the same year, was that calling the Labor Ministers to leave the Coalition Government before the appeal to the country which Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law decided upon within a few days of the signing of the Armistice:

"That this Special Conference of the Labor Party declares that Labor has faithfully carried out its pledges to support the national Government during the war period and that with the dissolution of Parliament the unprecedented emergency under which alone the Labor Party entered the Coalition Government has ceased to exist; the Conference, therefore, declares that from the date of the Proclamation of the General Election the Party dissociates itself from the Coalition Government and appeals for the support of the electors for a mandate on the principles contained in 'Labor and the New Social Order' so that the Party in the new Parliament may be free to promote its Reconstruction Policy in the most effective manner the Parliamentary situation as determined by the verdict of the electors will allow."

The result of the "coupon" election was an overwhelming victory for the Coalition Government and a great personal victory for Lloyd George as Prime Minister. Out of 602 seats in Great Britain, and on a register greatly enlarged by the new Act recently passed, the Coalition candidates were returned in no fewer than 458 constituencies.

The conditions were, by general admission, against the Labor Party. Their ex-Ministers had only just retired from the Government, several of their leading men were still under the cloud which had overshadowed them during the War, and Lloyd

George's demand for a verdict which would give him the power and prestige to conclude a sound Peace in Paris swept every other consideration from the board.

In these circumstances the Labor Party did surprisingly well in polling two and a half million votes for its 361 candidates, fifty-seven of whom were elected—an increase in Labor representation of fifteen seats as compared with the second 1910 Election.

The "coupon election" gave the country the chance of "getting its own back" (in no other words can the fight at Leicester be described) on the man who had so deeply wounded the patriotic feelings of the country in the hour of its supreme trial, and MacDonald's old constituency, which he had represented in the House for twelve eventful years, rejected him by the huge total of 14,000 votes, and, as though to make certain that he had learned his lesson, elected in his stead a patriotic "Labor" candidate running on the Coalition ticket.

But history has a trick of favoring those who are true to their ideals. And in that darkest hour before dawn events were stirring in the womb of time which were destined within six years to place that exile in Downing Street as the first Labor Prime Minister of Great Britain.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE AFTERMATH

WITH the coming of peace, what may be described as the first phase of the campaign against Ramsay MacDonald ended, and the second phase began. Up to the signing of the Armistice the vendetta against him had been pursued in the fierce glare of publicity. Month after month the speeches which he had delivered and the articles he had written in the early days of the war were reproduced, sometimes with gross misrepresentation, in the newspapers that were in full cry after the "Leicester traitor." The same extracts were used to denounce him on political platforms.

Now that MacDonald had been thrown out of Westminster by a huge majority the campaign subtly changed. In place of public contempt and platform denunciations there came silence. Labor's former leader had lost the leadership of his Party. He had lost his seat in the House of Commons. If he still occupied an official position as Treasurer of the Party, that was a matter of no consequence compared with the posts from which he had been driven out.

Truly, his defeat at Leicester was soon found to have brought him face to face with the "acid test" of his career.

This reverse differed radically from his early failures to enter Parliament. Then—in 1896 and 1900—he had been an unknown man preaching a strange creed. In 1918 he was a national figure, who, despite unpopularity, was recognized as the leading protagonist and architect of the Labor Party. Hence the jubilation among his opponents when his constituency reflected the feeling of the country at that time.

Those same opponents were quick to see their chance and to seize it. Having leveled him to the ground, they were determined

that he should not raise his head again or have any opportunity of becoming once more a national figure. And silence was their weapon. For four years they had howled at him in the Press and on the platform. Now they ignored him; tried to smother him with silence. Ever ready to make use of whatever weapon lay to his hand, he utilized the following four years for a speaking campaign in all parts of the country. He poured out books, pamphlets, programs which gave to Labor a creed and a purpose with which to face the tasks ahead. But the public heard nothing of them.

Had MacDonald been dependent for his strength upon the public opinion which is swayed by the Press or "spellbinders" the campaign would have succeeded. For a few months after the election, people idly wondered what had happened to the "pacifist." Then other and more exciting topics gained their attention and the silence was complete. Had any one, in 1919, been foolish enough to have suggested MacDonald as an alternative to Henderson, Thomas or Clynes as the leader of the Labor Party he would have been laughed at. Only those who knew the mind of organized Labor appreciated how, as one prophecy after another this man had made was proved true, the rank and file of the Party was drawing nearer to him again. His crusade up and down the country was bearing fruit, and MacDonald, still outside the charmed circle of leaders who were in the limelight, was recovering his old prestige, or such of it as he had ever lost, by sheer force of intellect, by superabundance of energy.

If the situation had been brought about in order to test once and for all whether MacDonald was a great figure or a man of straw, the circumstances could not have been bettered for the purpose. A small-minded man would have exposed his weakness in recrimination—against his Party and against those leaders of it who seemed to have relegated him to the shadows.

Ramsay MacDonald's mind drew its inspiration from the wells of history. He was content to await the "slow aim of wise-hearted Time"—for the turn of the tide. Meanwhile, if his voice was silenced in the House of Commons and in the Press, it was

the more vociferous at the countless meetings which were gathering fresh strength unto his Party.

All through the four years which followed the Armistice he continued to preach the Socialist creed, to demand a real peace and to point out how it could be obtained. His views upon European peace were the views which he had held since 1906, the views enunciated during the war years, and quoted in the preceding chapter. And the same views, it must be added, which he put into practise during his short tenure of office in 1924 and which, by general consent, enabled the first Labor Government to point to its work in foreign affairs as its greatest success. Ramsay MacDonald said in 1914 and onwards that the only true peace was a peace based on negotiation and not on might. "Shake hands," was his constant cry.

Shortly after the war, Ramsay MacDonald recorded his views upon the method by which the peace of Europe should be safeguarded by moving the following Resolution at the Labor Party Conference which met at Southport in 1919:

"The Conference is of opinion, now that Germany has decided to sign the treaty of peace, thereby opening up the opportunity of cooperation with the democracies of the world, that its speedy admission to the League of Nations and the immediate revision by the League of Nations of the harsh provisions of the treaty, which are inconsistent with the statements made on behalf of the Allied Governments when the Armistice was made, are essential both on grounds of honor and expediency; and it therefore calls on the Labor movement, in conjunction with the International, to undertake a vigorous campaign for the winning of popular support to this policy as a first step towards the reconciliation of the peoples and the inauguration of a new era of international cooperation and goodwill."

In proposing that Resolution, MacDonald declared that they should approach peace in one of three frames of mind. They could say: "If Germany were in our position she would do worse than this." He agreed, she would. He had never said anything else. But neither in making war nor in conducting war, nor in making peace was he going to copy German militarism. He knew

this, if he knew England at all, that a peace imposed upon this country by Germany would not have been a peace. There was not a single man, not a single mother's son that would have accepted it. It might have been forced upon them by violence, but it never would have quietened them. It would have been a rankling sore in their hearts, it would have been a disgrace, it would have been something they would have taught their children to be ashamed of, it would have been something they would have taught their grandchildren to have revolted against. He was not in favor of that kind of peace.

"There is another peace, a peace of punishment," continued MacDonald, in ringing tones. "Germany must bear the burdens of her own acts. That is punishment. But punishment is always best and most effective when there is a reserve of justice behind it. A man who strikes and confuses his passion with punishment is not punishing as a judge delivering justice. He is punishing as a passionate man destroying his enemy. That punishment will not bring peace.

"There is a third frame of mind—a peace which settles the European problems that caused the war, a peace that controls the evil passions of Europe, a peace that comes with such a magnificent demeanor to the world that it subdues the world as Daniel, and the atmosphere which surrounded him, subdued the wild passions of that den of lions to which he was committed. That is the peace of democracy which I advocate."

He claimed that the policy contained in the Resolution would save Britain, and Europe, from the danger of another war from the old causes.

"My final word is that we are democratic; we are inspired by a new political life. The values which we put on things are not the values which the old political parties put on the same things. The simple heart of man, the common experience of man, the kind of men and the kind of women who are of value to the State—they have all changed since the Labor Party came into existence. The old governing order has no longer the guidance, they no longer inspire. The people, inspired by common-sense ideas,



simple, elementary, humanitarian ideals, are marching, marching, marching to conquer and to hold the land they conquer."

The closing passage of this speech is noteworthy for a degree of eloquence not usually associated with the formal atmosphere of a Labor Party Conference:

"To-day, as I read about the peace, and as I hope and pray about the peace, this sort of strange thing comes into my mind, and I think it is the right thought to have. I think of the almost countless graves scattered in the center of Europe. Many of our children are lying there. It must be in the hearts of all to build a fair monument to those men who would never come back to bless us with their smiles. Do not you want a grand and magnificent monument built for them so that the next generations, even if they forget their names, will never forget their sacrifice? That is what I want. I almost feel that I hear the grass growing over them with a magnificent soothing harmony, and that simple, soothing peace of the growing grass seems to grow louder and more magnificent until the riot and distinctive sound of the guns is stifled and stilled by it. Can we have that sentiment to-day, that feeling in our hearts? Cannot we go in imagination to where our children lie and feel that in Europe, in our own hearts, that same peace will rule, and, through sorrow and through sacrifice, we shall obtain that wisdom and light which will enable Europe to possess peace for ever?"

Speaking in London a few months later—in April 1920—MacDonald showed that he was still absorbed by the problems which the war had left.

"France, as a result of the war, holds the key of Europe," he told an audience of Labor delegates. "If France pursues a peace policy, there will be peace; if she pursues a militarist policy, there will be militarism; a policy of revenge, there will be revenge. This country, France and all other countries, must pursue a policy of peace and wisdom. Those who are trying to make bad blood between France and ourselves are the greatest enemies Europe has at the present moment. The understanding between ourselves and France must be mutual, and it must not be one of Nationalist Imperialism. It cannot be one of narrow-minded

and close-visioned national interests. It must be one that includes doing justice and fair-play to all nations, a policy that will include and not exclude other nations. There must be an understanding not only between France and ourselves, but a complete understanding between all the European nations."

In another speech during the same month, at Govan Town Hall, he replied to a speech in which Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, had declared that the Labor Party was a Communist Party, and warned the country against the extremists in its ranks.

Ramsay MacDonald, in denying the allegation, said that no intelligent man could ever describe the Labor Party as a Communist organization.

"Mr. Lloyd George talked about other menaces—our extremists," he went on. "Well, I am not afraid of our extremists. I am far more afraid of him from the national point of view. Our extremists, like the Radical extremists in the days of the old Liberal Party, are men whose eyes are cast further ahead than the eyes of the vast majority of people. They are the David Livingstones who go out into Africa and come back and tell us the character of the land. They are the men who are keeping us alive. I disagree with them very often. I hope I never disagree with them without profiting at the same time by their thought and contributions. They may be a danger, but they are only going to be a danger when it is found to be impossible to harness them to responsibility."

The problem of the extremist, continued the speaker, was to put him in harness, and put him to some responsible work, whereas the problem of the demagogue was to stamp him out. He was a positive danger. That was the difference between the extremists in the Labor Party and Mr. Lloyd George. They must either govern by Parliament or direct action or some other outside form, "but personally," added MacDonald, "I stand for Parliamentary Government."

The Labor Party decided, shortly after the war, to erect a National Memorial of Freedom and Peace as a tribute to the members of the Party who had laid down their lives, but only

a few thousand pounds were collected and the project was eventually abandoned.

To MacDonald, as Treasurer of the Labor Party, fell the task of reporting to the Party Congress, in 1920, the progress of the scheme, and his speech revealed a lofty conception of the sacrifices which this generation had made in the war.

Remarking that the proposal was not to erect a War Memorial, he said: "It is not a memorial to embalm for ever the terrible passions of those years. It is a memorial for peace, a memorial for freedom, a memorial that is going to embody the finest spirit and the cleanest soul of Labor. Let us think of our dead, think what they died for, and, above all, think of the munificence of spirit in which we ourselves seek to do our work. I want it dissociated from thoughts which belong to this earth, and are earthy. Our dead are worthy of something cleaner and purer than that. I want the building, when it is created—however small it may be—to be regarded by us and our children not as a memorial of triumph, but in the same way that every good Britisher regards Lincoln Cathedral or Westminster Abbey. I want Labor leaders for generations to come to honor this memorial and look on it with sacred pride, and say, because their fathers did their duty, this was the last memorial that would ever have to be built for men and for the sons of men who had given their lives because some rulers were tyrants and all governments were false."

The four years during which MacDonald was out of Parliament were years of tremendous activity. He was confident that the return of peace and the wider franchise would bring to Labor high responsibilities, and he bent all his amazing energy to the task of preparing both himself and the Party for whatever Fate had in store for them.

When he was not speaking he was writing. Among the books of which he is the author, published during these years, are *Parliament and Revolution*, *Parliament and Democracy*, *Socialism After the War*, *A Policy for the Labor Party* and *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, his best-known work on the subject, which appeared in 1921. It was Ramsay MacDonald who took the ideas

then floating through his mind and the minds of men who thought as he did, examined them under the microscope of his keen intellect, and selecting those which stood the test of analysis, hammered them into a program in keeping with Labor's aims and calculated to enable the Party to deal with the problems of the morrow as they arose and demanded settlement. Had he not been defeated in 1918, these books and much clear thinking at a critical moment in Labor's fortunes would not have been possible. Withdrawn temporarily from Westminster, MacDonald could survey the field of politics with a detached eye, and forecast the trend of future events more surely than would have been possible had he been immersed in the routine matters which had before and during the war kept him busy at St. Stephens.

In addition, he edited the *Socialist Review*, and traveled extensively in the post-war Europe, thus gaining a first-hand knowledge of its problems which enabled him to return to the House of Commons in 1922 as one of the best-informed debaters on all International matters in that assembly.

Shortly after returning from a tour from France to Constantinople, he reviewed the condition of Europe after the war, and urged the need for a Labor Government in an address delivered at a Conference held at Port Talbot, in November 1920. This address was afterwards reprinted by the Aberavon Division Labor Party, for which constituency MacDonald was standing as prospective Labor candidate, under the title of *Labour's Message to a Ruined World*. In it MacDonald dealt with the problems then pressing for solution. The speech as circulated by the Labor Party at the time is reproduced elsewhere in this volume.<sup>1</sup> Here I quote only the concluding sentence of a masterly analysis:

"I often think of the verse—

'Oh, sometimes glimpses on my sight,  
Through present wrong, the eternal right;  
And step by step, since Time began,  
I see the steady gain of man.'

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix E.



"When I can say that from my heart, I think of the Labor movement and of the Independent Labor Party, of those glorious past years of fight, past years when, although beaten down on our hands and knees and almost broken we were never defeated, past years which bore to us the trophies of victory as well as the wounds of battle. Standing to-day in the midst of this Europe and with the consciousness of its tragedy in my heart, I still repeat that verse and believe it, because there are men and women, like yourselves, thinking, working and organizing, believing fine things and dreaming noble dreams, and determined that, in so far as you can, you are going to embody them in the practical government of this country."

Amid the pre-occupations of the post-war world, MacDonald did not forget that he was the leading protagonist of Socialism in this country. In his book, *Socialism after the War*,<sup>2</sup> he summarized his views on the methods by which the coming of the Socialist Commonwealth could be hastened. "The Socialist State," he wrote, "must be the condition of individual liberty and not merely an authority imposing obedience. Hence, the Socialist program must be so devised that its compulsions, its organization, its communal control shall be of a kind which liberates the individual, protects him from industrial and economic slavery, and makes possible for him an entry into a world of intellectual and spiritual freedom." And again: "The war has awakened the revolutionary spirit so that the hesitating and tentative proposals of social reform which a lethargic nation, even when most radical, demanded before the war, are of no use now. Policy must now be bold, thorough and revolutionary; and in the reconstruction the conditions from which so much industrial and political poverty and strife arose must not be modified only, but completely eliminated. In political matters the watchword, therefore, must not be 'as we were before the war,' but 'as we ought to have been before the war.'"

Turning to practical considerations, MacDonald advocated the wiping out of the greater part of the National Debt by conscription of accumulated wealth, increase in income-tax and death-

<sup>2</sup> *Socialism after the War*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald. National Labor Press.

duties, the nationalizing of railways and mines, and the reform of the Post Office so that it might be used for the transport of goods, for insurance, and for banking in ways not yet adopted.

Continuing, Mr. MacDonald wrote:

"Labor must not ask for mere restitution of old conditions, but for vast improvement after the war. Every low-paid trade should have a bottom standard wage given to it by law or administrative order; the Trade Unions must be taken to be the industrial representative of the workers, and their agreements with employers must be the standards applied by the Government whenever it has to decide what is fair or unfair in trade conditions. There must be no more quibbling about district rates and Trade Union rates. The Government must know only the agreed rates and must be able to enforce an agreement, if necessary. At the same time there must be no forfeiture of the right to strike or lock out. I hope they may never be used, but for some time yet they must be in the background.

"The control of workshops must be shared by organized Labor and a committee upon which Labor is adequately represented and which is based upon a system of shop stewards, should become a common feature of management.

"All schemes like profit-sharing, which tie up Labor without giving it adequate control and which induce it to remain satisfied with mere crumbs must be discouraged. Their influence in the past has not been to Labor's advantage, and now with a much wider outlook in front, their inadequacy is only the greater. Labor organization must be directed to raise the mass, and not only to benefit the trade—probably at other trades', or at the consumers', expense.

"Under these safeguards and with these inducements both Labor and Capital must consent to a great increase in productivity."

After outlining the imperative need for further social legislation—particularly vast housing schemes, land and village settlement, and improved educational facilities, he admits the vastness of the task which had been outlined in these words:

"Our task is vaster than any that has ever yet faced a nation. And yet if at the end of this devastating tragedy feeble futility, philanthropy and sham are to be accepted by our people as their portion, if the leaders

of Labor with the way open in front of them to citadels they have been long assaulting, turn away blinded in vision and craven in heart, and come to truces that are surrenders, they will have betrayed their class and, by that, the nation.

"Revolution is not a bloody upturning; it is the change which is made when men long asleep wake up, when society oppressed by the lethargy of its own complexities suddenly finds itself free to move, when a new tide of living energy rushing up into old channels breaks them and overflows in a fertilizing flood. The civilized world is in such a state to-day. Let Socialism boldly step out and take the opportunity which presents itself."

Those who wish to study both the Socialism of Ramsay MacDonald, and the roots of that Socialism, should turn to the pages of *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*. In this book is presented the case for the change in the industrial structure of Britain to which the Labor Party is committed. In its pages, too, the student will detect the scientific basis—the belief in society as an organism—which colors the political thought of the leader of the British Labor Movement.

Quotation cannot convey a clear picture of MacDonald's philosophy; I therefore reproduce only two passages which put the case against the Capitalist system of society:

"Managers and workpeople alike must make it profitable. If there be any conflict, it rules the conflict. It is the influence which determines whether we are to undertake the burden of tutoring the black man or interfering with the brown one. If it requires for its successful working a margin of unemployment, working-class families must submit to unemployment. If it must glut markets in order to maintain itself in working order, markets must be glutted. If it is essential that it must sometimes prey upon itself, its victims must submit as the victims of human sacrifice had to do in their day and generation. If it can flourish more vigorously for a time upon degeneration, its right to do so must be allowed."

And in another passage upon Capitalism:

"The characteristic of that system is this: that groups of people supply the public need in their own interests, for their own profit. These

interests spur them on to perfect their organization of supply, not out of compassion for the public, but because it pays them to do so. The demand that comes to men to-day to work is a demand that they should go and make profits for those who own capital. Incidentally, they make a living for themselves, only incidentally. The first essential of their being employed at all is that their employers make profits by allowing them to work. This is the crux of the whole matter. The machinery of production and exchange has been constructed and is run in order that communal need may be supplied by self-interest, and in the nature of the case the self-interest is the self-interest of the owners of industrial capital.

"How does the system work? Each individual owner, or company of owners, produces so as to gain or try to gain the maximum profit for himself. This may be done by limiting output or increasing it; by selling at high prices or low; by adopting the national policy of Free Trade or Protection; by competing or combining. But whatever policy is pursued, its primary aim is to increase profits. It may lead to booms and depressions, to overtime and unemployment, to fortunes and bankruptcies, to economies and waste. No matter. Thus and thus only can venturous self-interest, always daring, always hoping, always acquisitive, serve the community and itself—itsself first of all. It is controlled by the economic possibilities of the market, never by a conception of social duty. . . . The system is not bridled in its working by a just or moral relation to the community, but only by the limits of exploitable opportunity. Capitalism always tends to take the maximum possible reward for its services."<sup>3</sup>

Throughout his speeches and writings of those dark days it is possible to detect two main ideas for the advocacy of which the Labor Party to-day may well thank him.

From the first he realized that Communism could never have anything in common with Socialism.

When, in 1919, the British Labor Party faced the greatest danger of its short existence—the danger of a Communist revolt of the kind which at that time actually broke nearly every Socialist Party in Europe, it was Ramsay MacDonald, then facing the darkest period of his career, who was Labor's spearhead in

<sup>3</sup> *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, p. 24.



meeting and beating the challenge. At that moment the official Labor Party was, because of its association with the Coalition Government, almost defenseless against the attack, and without the help of MacDonald, whose clear vision instantly saw the vital importance of the issue, might well have been beaten. Not for the first time, MacDonald then saved the Labor Party when it is doubtful whether any one else could have done so.

And when, in April 1922, a final effort was made to propitiate, rather than fight, the sympathizers with Communism, by achieving unity with Russia in the Socialist International, it was MacDonald as a British delegate who proved conclusively that the Russian delegates held views making such unity impossible.

While there are many, even within the Labor Party, who admit that there was delay in publicly excommunicating the Communists from its ranks, MacDonald's speeches at that time clearly prove that he at least had no illusions on the true nature and design of the Communist dictators of Russia.

It was MacDonald who first faced the anger of the extremists—then his staunchest supporters—by opposing definitely and in unmistakable terms any alliance with those whose political views were based on force.

In the months following the Armistice every consideration of interest urged him to take an opposite course. His attitude during the war had to a certain extent alienated the sympathies of that section of the Party which had supported the Government, and at its close the following which remained loyal to him was mainly drawn from those who had most vociferously welcomed the Russian Revolution.

As late as 1920, when a proposal was made that he should co-operate with the Parliamentary Labor Party in the tactical direction of their activities inside the House, negotiations broke down because MacDonald stipulated that the final invitation must be practically unanimous. This unanimity to appoint MacDonald to an office connected with the Parliamentary Labor Party could not be obtained at that time and the matter was dropped.

Ramsay MacDonald's views on Communism, as expressed in

his speeches and writings from 1919 onwards, form an illuminating commentary alike upon the sincerity of the man and upon those who have thought fit to declare that Labor, under his leadership, has an affinity with the present rulers of Russia.

Immediately after the signing of the Armistice, he passed this judgment on the colossal and terrifying experiment in self-government with which Lenin was then grappling behind the fog that shrouded events in Russia from the outside world:

"I do not excuse, far less approve, of everything the Lenin Government has done, but the Lenin Government has shown that it can give Russia a chance of settling down. Lenin has had to bow to unhappy necessity, as at Brest-Litovsk; he has had to seize the nettle with ruthless will, as when he disfranchised all the bourgeoisie; but when the tale of his errors, his evil necessities, and his tyrannies has been told to the full, the balance will remain in his favor."<sup>4</sup>

Interviewed in June 1919, Mr. MacDonald said, with reference to the support which the Allies were then giving to the White Russians: "I have always held that the attack on Russia was a disgraceful one. This advance is a deplorable thing, and is going to disgrace our country and leave behind it effects which I believe will be disastrous to the honor and good name of Britain. It is because I think the Allies are strengthening Bolshevism that I am so bitterly opposed to the action that is going on now. We have good evidence that the Allied intervention is keeping the Bolsheviks going."

Writing in the same year he stated: "A dictatorship to maintain the Revolution in its critical eruptive stages may be tolerated; but a dictatorship through the period of reconstruction, a dictatorship from which are to issue the decrees upon which the reconstruction of society is to be based, is absolutely intolerable. No Socialist worth anything would submit to such a thing. It can be maintained only in such diffused communities as Russia; it can be admired only by Socialists at a distance."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Parliament and Revolution*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald. National Labor Press, 1919.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Again: "So far as this country is concerned we have reached the stage when the Socialist program is a matter of political fighting. A Parliamentary Election will give us all the power that Lenin had to get by a revolution, and such a majority can proceed to effect the transition from Capitalism to Socialism with the co-operation of the people and not merely by edict. More than that, a country which has gained already all that a political revolution can give it, cannot begin its social revolution as Russia began its. To have an election followed by a revolution for the purpose of carrying out the program of the defeated minority belongs to the world of playfully fanciful romance, not to that of serious politics."

Declaring (of revolutions) that "history may justify their authors, but it certainly will not their copyers," MacDonald sums up the Russian upheaval in these words:

"The Russian Revolution has been one of the greatest events in the history of the world, and the attacks that have been made upon it by frightened ruling classes and hostile capitalism should rally to its defense every one who cares for political liberty and freedom of thought. But it is Russian. Its historical setting and parentage is Russian; the economic State in which it is is Russia."

In an Open Letter to a Communist,<sup>6</sup> he elaborated further the reasons for his belief in democracy, as opposed to violence.

"I am a Democrat," he wrote, "and therefore I must believe in public opinion and education; I am a Socialist, and therefore I must believe in the steady transformation of society upon a plan of growth rather than by its obedience to orders. I must have some proportion between ways and means, some regard for the nature of the instrument and its work. I do not use a bread-knife to sharpen my pencil, nor a boot-brush to clean my teeth. I do not beat my children until they become wise or starve them until they become moral—my reasons being that bruises and wisdom, hunger and morality, have no relation to each other. In some cases obedience is good in itself, and orders may then be enforced,

<sup>6</sup> "A Letter to a Communist," by J. Ramsay MacDonald. *The Venturer*, January 1921.

but to expect a whole society to behave decently on order, and on order to do the right thing in thought and conduct, is shown by the history of the Soviet Government (by its abandonment of Sovietism, its treatment of the land, its suppression of workshop control, its concessions to American financiers) to be like believing that every Scotsman who knows the Shorter Catechism by heart is immune from all the snares of life. Violent means and a Socialist object do not go together. The passions say 'violence,' the head says 'Socialism,' the emotions say that they cooperate, the reason that they are at war."

Mr. MacDonald goes on to point out that "in ten years the work of the Bolshevik Government, freed from outside attacks and commanding the necessities of life, will bring Russia to where (and no further) five years of a Labor Government in this country backed by public opinion would be; two years of Bolshevism in this country would bring us to where Russia was a dozen years before the Revolution." Then comes this merciless analysis of the Communist creed—written, remember, by J. Ramsay MacDonald, not Sir William Joynson Hicks or Winston Churchill:

"The Communist is a politician in crinolines and cork-screw curls. The common people in history have been working through violence into politics, and now that they have got there I am in too great a hurry to go back. I know that ancient times had their attractions—the Spartacus Revolt, Wat Tyler, John Ball, Oliver Cromwell—that the French Revolution is inspiring in spite of its dirt, and the Commune heroic in spite of its squabbles and its failure before the Versailles troops came to murder it. I prefer to read about them rather than to repeat them, and to use the powers they have given us rather than neglect them. The disfranchised revolted during the past two centuries in order that their offspring might not have to revolt any more but govern. I, being a modern creature, believe in government rather than in revolutions or dictatorships."

Has the case in favor of Parliamentary government ever been stated more lucidly in a few words? I doubt it.

Before leaving the question of MacDonald's views on Communism, a topic which has supplied much ammunition of doubtful



quality to his opponents at recent elections, I reproduce two further quotations.

The first is a passage from a speech delivered at the Aldwych Club, London, four years after those given above, when the swing of the pendulum had already carried Ramsay MacDonald back to the House of Commons and back to the leadership of the Party.

"To call members of the Labor Party Bolsheviks is to take the view of the man who lives on the earth standing on his head.

"We have as much to do with Bolshevism as with the man in the moon—except that we regard it as an enemy. A good many of you might consider yourselves justified in calling me a Bolshevik. As a matter of fact, you would be absolutely wrong, and wrong also in regard to every member of the Labor Party in the House of Commons. We have not a thousandth-millionth part of sympathy with the Bolshevik point of view."

Finally, here is an extract from a speech made by Lenin, who surely knew a Bolshevik when he saw one,—a speech which the British Communist Party, which has long given up Ramsay MacDonald as hopeless, reproduced and circulated as anti-MacDonald propaganda as recently as 1928:

"He is a typical representative of the Second International, a worthy colleague of Scheidemann, and Kautsky, Vandervelde, Branting, and the rest of the International social traitors.

"Ramsay MacDonald's speeches and articles are the best example that could be given of that smooth, melodious, banal, and Socialist-seeming phraseology which serves in all developed capitalist countries to camouflage the policy of the bourgeoisie inside the Labor Movement.

"MacDonald remains throughout a bourgeois pacifist and middle-class reformer, cherishing the illusion of a non-class State. MacDonald recognizes the class struggle only as a figure of speech, just as do all deceivers, sophists, and pedants of the bourgeoisie."

To few men, even politicians, comes the fate of being declared a traitor to their own country, and execrated by their supposed allies at the same time. But if Ramsay MacDonald was still to

be accused of "flirting" with Bolshevism he was able in 1923 to point out that at every Labor Party Conference Communism had been heavily defeated, and that at the 1922 Conference an innocent-looking motion that Communists should be allowed to affiliate, if they accepted the constitution of the Party, had been soundly beaten.

"Whatever Bolshevism proposes to do," wrote MacDonald in that year, "it is to do it by revolution followed by a dictatorship. That is far more akin to Fascism and Right-Wing British Toryism than to Labor."

This refusal to have any "truck" with Communism was rooted in the second governing idea which MacDonald kept steadily in view at this time. Labor was going to rule. Nothing separated the Party from power except the necessity for converting voters. To do that the Party needed a literature which would apply the tenets of Socialism to the specific problems of the hour. To MacDonald and Sidney Webb, more than any other men, Labor owes the fact that from 1918 it has possessed a definite aim and policy. Together, after the war, they revised Labor's creed and infused it with a living faith based upon the needs of the new world.

In proposing at the 1920 Labor Party Conference that the affiliation fee to the Party be increased from twopence per member to threepence, MacDonald stated that "they meant to see to it that there was not a hole or corner in a district that had not got some part, at any rate, of the Labor Party organization; that some active affiliated society of the Labor Party must be spread from John o' Groats to Land's End, and from the North Sea to the Atlantic, and they were not going to be satisfied until that was done, so far as organization was concerned."

While he was working thus, behind the scenes, smoothing over the divisions within the Party due to the war, giving the Party a new program ready for the fights ahead, inspiring it with the will to win—or at least to poll its last possible vote, the man in the street was content to imagine that Ramsay MacDonald had shot his bolt and was finished. When other men were adopted as

Labor candidates in the first by-elections in the 1918 Parliament, this view seemed to have been confirmed.

It was not until 1921 that he tried to reenter the House of Commons. In that year Will Crooks retired from Parliament, and MacDonald was adopted as Labor candidate for Woolwich in his stead.

The news that MacDonald was trying to get back to Westminster was the signal for a fresh outbreak of calumny against him. His opponents were determined that he should remain in exile, and it must be admitted that the average Londoner, even if prepared to admit that MacDonald was sincere, had little use for his views on war or peace.

In these conditions the war-time obloquy was turned on again at full strength. The same extracts from the same speeches were raked over again. The old cry of "traitor" was heard in the streets. All anti-Labor forces combined with the Communists and set to work to prevent MacDonald topping the poll. The result was one of the most fiercely contested by-elections of recent years, and one, because of the tactics of some sections of the opposition, which few can look back upon without shame.

This East Woolwich election was, indeed, the culmination of the campaign of hate which had been Ramsay MacDonald's lot for seven long years. His opponents were not concerned about defeating a Labor candidate. They would rather have lost a dozen seats elsewhere than this one to a man who was already consolidating his position afresh within the Labor Party. The statement in the official Labor Party report on the fight—"the tactics adopted by the enemy were of the most unscrupulous kind"—was in the case of this particular contest justified.

Mr. MacDonald's election address, dated February 15th, 1921, may, in the circumstances of the campaign, be described as a statesmanlike document. As always, he avoided personal issues both in his speeches and statements.

After expressing "deep regret" that the continued ill-health of Will Crooks had compelled him to resign from the House of Com-



LABOR'S LEADER ADDRESSING A MEETING FROM THE BACK OF THE FAMOUS MOTOR  
CAR DURING A GENERAL ELECTION TOUR THROUGH INDUSTRIAL BRITAIN





mons, the Labor candidate proceeded to indict the record of the Coalition in scathing phrases:

"Europe remains unsettled, the scene of famine and repression, of civil strife, and financial chaos, of industrial paralysis and of threatening war. It is time for the peoples who have suffered and are still suffering, as you are, to insist upon democratic settlements, and the establishment of a representative League of Nations that shall be a League of Peoples not only in name.

"In your Empire, India and Egypt present menacing problems and both political and industrial enmities join in the turmoil.

"Before the grass has grown green on the graves of the men who died 'in the war to end wars' we are told that we must prepare for the next."

Turning to Home affairs, Ramsay MacDonald declared:

"At Home two questions of the most pressing urgency demand the immediate attention of the House of Commons—Unemployment and Ireland. The former has been handled by the Government with a feeble incompetence that has deepened our poverty, the latter with a perverse ruthlessness that has bred hate, murder and dishonor.

"Unemployment is a feature of our system, which periodically breaks down, bringing distress upon hundreds of thousands of decent working-class families. After the war, unemployment was bound to come. The Government was warned again and again—ever since 1915—by the Labor Party, but made no adequate provision for the evil day; indeed, by its stupid policy of putting obstacles in the way of trade with Russia and of deliberately keeping Central Europe in economic chaos it has intensified the crisis. It has tried to use the needs of the ex-Service men, whom it has neglected, to destroy the Trade Union defenses which they and civil labor require for their protection; and to cover up its own responsibility for the delay in building houses it has sought to pick a quarrel between the ex-Service men and the Building Trade Unions. By instituting and trying to make general a system of short-time without compensation, it has lowered the general working-class standards of life, and has made the permanent reduction of these standards easy. By imposing unfair conditions upon Local Authorities who try to do their duty, it has diminished the chances of local relief.

"I support the proposals of the Labor Party which received the endorsement of the National Trade Union and Labor Congress in London on the 27th January last, including the opening up of trade with Russia and other European States, the building of an adequate supply of houses, the organization of the work of Local Authorities, a satisfactory scheme of Unemployment Grants."

After references to the need for a policy of reconciliation in Ireland, the elimination of waste expenditure, a levy on accumulated wealth of over £5000, and a Budget in which the necessities of life would not be taxed, Ramsay MacDonald concluded his indictment of the Lloyd George Coalition with this exhortation:

"A victory for Labor here and now will cheer our Movement in its fight against chicanery and exploitation throughout the whole country. Labor is now under-represented in Parliament. In the autumn of 1918, when peace had just come and the people were buoyant, their joy was exploited to return the 'coupon' Parliament of 'flinty-faced men who had made a good thing out of the war.' It is now discredited, and the demand becomes general that it should be ended. Let East Woolwich give a hearty blow to the tottering thing and help to put in its place a Government which, both at home and abroad, will serve the interests of the common people, do homage to our dead by carrying out their ideals of Liberty and Justice, and save our land from the crushing burden of debt and the oppressive menace of new wars."

Ramsay MacDonald opened his campaign at two packed meetings at Bostall Hill School and Earl Street. In his first speech he showed that he was under no false illusions about the strength of the campaign of calumny which the by-election had whipped up to renewed frenzy. "I don't hope for what you may call a pleasant fight," he remarked, "I know that it is not going to be a pleasant fight. I don't hope for a gentlemanly fight. It is not going to be a gentlemanly fight. I don't hope for a clean fight, because I know it is not. I know this, that so far as I am concerned, and so far as my friends are concerned, we are going to fight a clean fight. We are going to examine political principles and not going to insult you by pulling down the flag of Labor,

dragging it in the dirt, and lift it up in order that the breeze may dry it and clean it from some of the dirt that it might have got. The day has come when working men and women, having got the vote, have to exercise their intelligence in the exercise of the vote. Appeal to the emotion, appeal to the passions, appeal to the prejudices, appeal to the ignorance—let the Coalition do that. Labor will not do it, because Labor ought not to do it.”

There followed a review of the Coalition’s record and a statement of Labor’s aims. And then the man who for years had been unable to make himself heard at any public meeting in London, who only a year or two before had been the central figure of a riot on the common not five miles from where he stood, said in a tone which vibrated with emotion: “I am one of the old-fashioned sort of people who don’t like to tamper lightly with the realities of life. Stevenson wrote one striking sentence which in these later years is often before me: ‘Dare to be unworthy of your dead.’ That applies not merely to fathers and mothers, but to politicians and citizens.” He paused and, pointing a finger at his great audience, uttered the challenge again in measured tones: “Dare to be unworthy of your dead! Remember what your dead died for. And look about in Europe to-day and see what has been done by this country and its statesmen who have been given power because our sons have died for their country. We want Labor to redress the balance.”

Speaking at another crowded meeting at Earl Street, Plumstead, MacDonald ended with a dramatic appeal to the electors of Woolwich to place him at the top of the poll, not for the sake of Ramsay MacDonald, but as a message of hope to Labor everywhere. “It is not my fight; it is just a Labor fight. It is not going to be my victory; it is just going to be a Labor victory. The candidate, the fight, the victory are all part and parcel of that great movement of awakening Labor—Labor expanding itself, Labor putting its own ideals before it, Labor selecting its own men, its own sons, its own daughters, who will not desert it; Labor selecting them, making them its representatives; Labor getting in touch with them, Labor understanding whence it has come, where it is, and



whither it is going; Labor at last confident on account of its experiences in the House of Commons. Well, then, Labor alive, Labor united, Labor determined, Labor organized, Labor politically conscious, is called upon by events, by the stress they have not caused themselves, to come out and save Europe, to save the honor of this country, to save Ireland, to save all those democratic Governments, nationally and internationally, from being swamped by the new outburst of Capitalism. Labor is called upon to use its mind, to use its conscience, to use its soul, to use its power, to use its influence on an England that will be an International Power, an England that will speak in peace to the world, and will speak in hope, in gladness, in fraternity to its own people. That is my ideal, that is my inspiration, that is my object."

For sixteen days the contest was waged with unexampled bitterness. Mr. Garvin, in the *Observer*, advocated the return of Mr. MacDonald as one of Labor's greatest Parliamentarians, but his was a voice crying in a wilderness of misrepresentation and downright lies.

Women canvassers working for the Coalition candidate, and who presumably should have known better, did not hesitate to inform working-class women that the Labor candidate was an immoral man who had been very cruel to his wife! That statement may be taken as a fair sample of how far the usually high standard of British politics was degraded in this contest. One does not have to agree with Mr. MacDonald upon all things—or indeed upon anything—to express a hope that those carefully nurtured ladies have since been filled with shame.

The question was—Would this persecution cheat MacDonald of victory in an old Labor seat? Right up to the close of the poll the issue was in doubt. Even after the counting had begun, many believed that MacDonald was "in." But the final figures showed that he had been defeated by the narrow margin of 683 votes.

In London the tide was still running too strongly against him to make victory possible in even a constituency favorable to Labor. The question, "Can Ramsay come back?" seemed to have been answered with a decided negative.

Prior to his adoption as Labor candidate for East Woolwich, he had already become prospective Labor candidate for Aberavon, a Welsh mining seat which in 1918 had returned a Coalitionist by a six-thousand majority. After Woolwich, MacDonald returned to Aberavon and prepared to fight there when a General Election came.

The outlook was not promising. Indeed, Aberavon was regarded by most of the political prophets as a hopeless proposition for a Labor candidate. For a candidate with MacDonald's record, added the wise ones, Aberavon was a sure Labor defeat.

Those who held that view did not realize that during all the eight years of exile the opposition to him had been strongest in a London dominated by the Conservative and Liberal press. I recollect Mr. MacDonald making speeches (some of them recorded in this volume) at orderly meetings in the Midlands and North in days when his very appearance in the capital city would have been the signal for a riot. Moreover, the rank and file were coming to realize that this man spoke with more experience and authority than any other figure in the Movement. If he were under a cloud, the cloud was often torn by the flashes of his eloquence, the prophetic thunder of his voice.

Despite the knowledge that many people regarded his war record with grave suspicion, MacDonald did not seek to make people forget. He continued to justify the Independent Labor Party and its policy whenever occasion offered.

Speaking at Sunderland in November 1921, after his Woolwich defeat, he challenged his opponents to prove that he had been wrong. "The long view is not popular, as we found in 1914," he declared. "Every one can look back and say, 'I have been an idiot.' Only a few people can look forward and say, 'You are going to be an idiot.' That was just the difference between the I.L.P. in 1914 and the general attitude to-day, except that the nation has lost seven years of its life—seven years of the calendar, but a century in civilization. Members of the Independent Labor Party have no need to apologize for their opinions in 1914—in-deed, from 1906 onwards we were telling the country whither it

was drifting. The war came, and now wherever you have great celebrations of mourning people there are thousands and thousands of ex-service men walking the streets not to shoulder arms, but to shoulder grief and poverty.

"History has us in safe keeping," declared MacDonald, and he went on to show how, in his opinion, the I.L.P. attitude towards the war had been justified by events—by the unemployment, the smashing up of markets, the coming bankruptcy of Germany, the little wars in Europe and the international troubles of the statesmen. "Let us be proud of our party and of our achievements," he concluded.

MacDonald had not long to wait for the next, and for him crucial, trial of strength. Towards the end of 1922 the historic meeting of the Conservative Party at the Carlton Club heralded the end of the Coalition Government and precipitated the long-talked-of General Election.

This time the Labor Party put 414 candidates in the field, compared with 361 in 1918, and won 142 seats. The total vote secured by Labor throughout the country was 4,235,457 compared with 2,244,945 in the previous appeal to the country. Labor had therefore won 67 seats and increased its votes by nearly two millions—remarkable evidence of the Party's ever-growing strength in the industrial constituencies.

This was not the whole story of success, however. Labor, by virtue of its increased strength and the split in the Liberal ranks, found itself for the first time His Majesty's Opposition.

Another milestone had been reached in the march of our youngest political party to power.

What of MacDonald's fate in the contest? During the campaign only the *Manchester Guardian* reported the fight which he was making at Aberavon. The speeches of other Labor leaders were reported, but the silent pressure against MacDonald still continued.

If the Press ignored him, and the populace forgot him in the excitement of the campaign, his own people rallied to his side as never before. In 1918 the pendulum had begun to swing back.

In 1922 it had swung far enough for the exile to wipe out a six-thousand Coalition majority and win Aberavon for Labor.

That result was the most striking of all Labor's gains. It meant more than a seat won. It meant that the most bitterly fought political vendetta of modern times had failed.

The cheers with which vast crowds, watching the election results being flashed upon the illuminated signs in London and other cities, greeted the result of the Aberavon contest showed that the rank and file of the Party knew what MacDonald's return to Westminster meant to their strength.

"Iconoclast" has placed on record a picture of how the news reached London:

"The fog was sweeping up and the air deadly chilly when, after three hours of watching, more or less silent, suddenly there appeared on the illuminated board: 'Glamorgan, Aberavon . . . Labor Gain.' The cheers rang out: no need to ask 'Who is Aberavon?' There was something electrical, even in the dead letters."<sup>7</sup>

"The electors knew what they were doing when they sought and lifted up out of the darkness the man who through years had paid the price of adherence to principle," adds "Iconoclast."

The exile had not only won, he had won by a solid margin of over three thousand votes, polling 14,315 against the Conservative candidate's 11,111.

Mr. MacDonald has himself placed on record the story of his victory. "To explain how Aberavon was fought is really to explain the ordinary electioneering methods of the day," he has written.<sup>8</sup> "The fight was harder than in most places, the interest may have been a little more widespread, and the proportion of electors who voted may have been well above the average in consequence, but the methods were pretty much the same as elsewhere.

"The registers of to-day contain an uncomfortably large number

<sup>7</sup> *The Man of To-morrow*, by "Iconoclast." Leonard Parsons, 1924.

<sup>8</sup> "Aberavon," in *Wanderings and Excursions*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald. Jonathan Cape, 1925.



of voters who are interested in the excitement of elections but not in politics, and whose votes depend upon a catchword or a whim or a reputation. The existence of these electors makes stunt issues possible, and drives candidates more and more to fight upon sheer propaganda balderdash such as was printed on the blue bills which were pasted on the walls throughout the country in the interests of Tory candidates fighting Labor. Nine-tenths of the criticisms passed upon the Capital Levy proposal (such as that it penalized thrift, that it was a reduction in industrial capital and so on) were of the same quality. It looks as though this method of electioneering has come to stay, and the party mainly responsible for this debasement in our political currency is the Tory Party. We have either to reply by following it into misquotation, prevarication and misrepresentation, or put the method of serious discussion up against it and support it with strenuous will. We tried the latter at Aberavon and got a political verdict."

Mr. MacDonald goes on to explain that the item in his program that started as a menace and grew into a perfect treasure was the proposal for a Capital Levy, then in the forefront of Labor aims.

"When the Press opened its attack," he continued, "I felt in doubt as to whether the people at meetings, uncomfortably crowded, would tolerate the somewhat elaborate and complicated arguments and explanations that would be necessary for an effective reply. The result astonished me. As I experimented with economic arguments that increased in their technicality, interest increased. The nature of the National Debt, the incidence of taxation to pay for it, the nature of industrial capital, the effect of a heavy income-tax on industrial investment, how the payment of the capital value of an annual income-tax imposition is not confiscation and does not reduce industrial capital—and such matters—were positively devoured by the audiences. I have no hesitation in saying that no single item did me so much good and enabled me to turn the election to true educational use as this."

The man who had seen a Labor "Party" of three, returned to a Parliament in which solid ranks of members spoke and voted in the name of Labor. The man who had been told "it could not

be done" returned to find the Party he had had so powerfully helped to create facing the Conservative Government as the Opposition. But one more short step, and their positions would be reversed. Labor would rule. The faith which had never wavered during the years of adversity must have glowed warm within him that day.

When once the pendulum begins to move, it does not pause midway in its swing. The man who was ready to serve in the rank and file was, within a week, and to the surprise of even some members of his own party, elected leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party in place of J. R. Clynes. 1914 was wiped out in that hour. MacDonald had "come back" with a vengeance!

"So, within the space of less than a week," "Iconoclast" has written, "the tables were completely turned. The silence was broken. The Press was beaten. It had to bow its head, as gracefully as it knew how, before the accomplished fact. The slate was cleaned: it was suggested that the tradition of pre-1914 days was resumed. A few voices recalled sadly that there had been no recantation, that MacDonald had never receded an inch from the position of August 1914. But the general effort was 'Forgive and forget.'"

It is worthy of note that MacDonald owed his election to the votes of the more advanced block in the Party, who expected from him a "fighting lead" which they felt was lacking in the Party under Mr. Clynes. Since 1922 some of those supporters have announced that MacDonald in turn is too moderate a leader, and to-day they show open preference to Maxton or some other member of the Labor "ginger" group. But in the intervening years MacDonald has won for himself such a position of strength as Labor's greatest Parliamentarian that if the majority of those who voted for him in 1922 were to-day to vote for his supersession, his position as leader would still be secure, for the Party, as it secures fresh strength from the constituencies, is broadening its membership, and those within it see clearly to-day that there is no Oliver in the field possessed of the intellectual gifts and statesmanship of this Roland who has wrought such a change in

the fortunes of the Party, and in the prestige of the Party outside the House of Commons, during the past seven years.

MacDonald's election to the leadership of the Labor forces was followed by one of the most unselfish gestures ever made by a man in our political history. No sooner was it known that he had been elected by a small majority than the deposed J. R. Clynes agreed to be nominated for the office of deputy-chairman and to work as his chief lieutenant.

Consider the position. These two men had pursued different paths through the war. Clynes had been a Cabinet Minister—MacDonald an Ishmael. The pioneer from Lancashire had carried the heavy burden of leading the Party through difficult years. He might reasonably have expected that he would be the first Labor leader of the Opposition. He had earned that post. Yet in the moment of success, when his hopes must have been high, he was deposed in favor of a man who had been banished into outer darkness eight years before.

I do not know which is the finer—the recognition of MacDonald's political supremacy which that action showed, or the revelation of Clynes's modesty and loyalty. Certainly no other man has ever carried out so completely the maxim "All for Labor."

Mr. MacDonald himself acknowledged that unselfish gesture in these words:

"In this connection I take the opportunity of doing homage to my predecessor in office, Mr. Clynes. His loyalty has been magnificent, and has set for every one an example so conspicuously fine that no one can fail to be moved by it. If it be that fate has success in its keeping for the Party, no one will have contributed more to that than Mr. Clynes. In what I myself felt it my duty to do, I was moved by what I considered were the best interests of the Party, and Mr. Clynes as a colleague has been perfect. If I succeed in what I have placed before me to do, I shall want no harvest except the happiness in my own mind of having given Labor a Parliamentary position of power; others must come in and complete the work, as in the course of nature that can hardly be reserved for me now."

Events were to prove MacDonald wrong in that prediction, for the pendulum had not ceased its swing. Within another year the Baldwin Government had gone down at the polls in the Protectionist election, and the country woke up to find a Labor Government in office, with Ramsay MacDonald filling the two greatest offices of the State.

During the darkest hours of the war MacDonald remembered what John Bright had endured, and drew strength from the eventual justification of that Radical stalwart. If ever another politician in this land has to withstand the darts of an enraged public opinion, then that man will certainly, if he is wise, turn to the story of Ramsay MacDonald's career between 1914 and 1922 for the strength and inspiration of which he may stand in need. For in the whole tangled skein of British politics there is to be found no more striking instance of a man plunged from power into the depths—into depths where he found awaiting him loneliness, hatred, obloquy, everything but dishonor—only in the course of time to be elevated once more to power and prestige far exceeding that he had formerly known.

It is probable that when Labor, its mission fulfilled, looks back over the record still awaiting it in the mists of Time, it will decide that the events which turned the defeated candidate at Woolwich in 1921 into the first Labor Prime Minister at the beginning of 1924 were the most dramatic in all its long and romantic history.



## CHAPTER X

### HIS MAJESTY'S OPPOSITION

**B**EFORE coming to the great experiment when Ramsay MacDonald, as the leader of the second largest party in the House of Commons was, in 1924, called upon by the King to form a Government, some attention must be paid to the short-lived Administration presided over first by Bonar Law and, from Whitsuntide 1923, when that statesman retired, by Stanley Baldwin.

The Parliament which assembled at Westminster in November 1922 was noteworthy, from the point of view of the Labor Party, for two reasons. First of these was the return of Ramsay MacDonald to the leadership of the Party in the House of Commons; the second was the fact that for the first time in history the Party faced the Ministers of the Crown across the Treasury Bench as His Majesty's Opposition.

Labor had not only "come back" after the doubts and hesitations of the war years, it had elbowed the historic Liberal Party out of the limelight, and was able to claim public attention and interest. Had the public guessed, when Mr. MacDonald rose on November 23rd, 1922, to move an amendment to the King's speech, that a year later the victor of Aberavon would have changed places with Stanley Baldwin, and be speaking with the authority and prestige of a Prime Minister of Great Britain, it is certain that the demand for seats in the Strangers' Gallery would have been even more severely taxed than it was by those who wanted to judge the caliber of these almost unknown men who had been elevated by the verdict of the polls to high position in the councils of the realm.

MacDonald returned to Westminster just in time to express his opinion of the Irish Settlement, which it was a first duty of the new Parliament to ratify.

"We will do all we can," he stated in his first speech, "to help to hasten to close this old bad chapter of Irish relations with this country, and we will do it in the belief that, in closing that chapter, we are opening one which will be happier for Ireland, and more honorable for this country. The word that will go from this House to Ireland is that in doing this act of reparation to Ireland, Ireland, free to give what it likes and to withhold what it likes, may give, as a gift, the affection to this country that it has always refused to give."

The immediate policy which the leader of the Labor Party proposed to urge upon the country was indicated in the Labor Amendment to the King's Speech, moved at an early date in the Session. It ran:

"But regret that, in face of unexampled unemployment, largely the result of four years of mistaken policy, for which the Government as the dominant part of the late Coalition is responsible, there is no proposal for an adequate or equitable treatment of the victims of that policy, including full recognition of what is entirely a national obligation, nor any indication of a change to enable our European customers to buy our goods again and so restore international trade and stabilize international exchange."

Speaking in the Debate on this Amendment, MacDonald outlined Labor's three immediate demands.

"Our Amendment," he declared, "calls for three things, and criticizes the Government for not doing them. Firstly, in the state of unemployment such as we have to-day, we must have ameliorative work or ameliorative treatment. It has been said again and again from these benches, if you cannot find work which is your first responsibility, then maintenance must be found. You have not found maintenance, and you have not found work.

"Money subsidy without labor is a last resort," continued the Leader of the Opposition, in reference to the "Dole," "adopted not because it is good in itself, but out of sheer necessity, with the full knowledge that it is bad in itself, and therefore the Government's duty is to go on developing a scheme which will produce as quickly as possible a normal state of trade."

Mr. MacDonald went on to say that the two great difficulties in the way of better trade were German reparations and the enormous National Debt.

"Until we lighten the National Debt, we cannot lower the cost of our productions and improve our position in the neutral markets of the world as we would like to do. How can it be done? Honorable Members opposite were a little hilarious when my Honorable friend, the member for Colne Valley (Mr. Snowden), declined to enter into a controversy about the Capital Levy. I can assure Honorable Members that they will not have to wait very long for that. In the meantime, I will content myself with inviting them to consider how they can reduce the National Debt. There is a tribute being paid from the National income of something like three hundred million pounds per annum. You cannot go on paying that. The nation, the industrial nation, cannot go on paying that tribute. Wages cannot go on bearing the taxation which is necessary to pay it. It is imposing such heavy taxation that a scientific system of taxation is impossible. It cannot be done. Yet business men with large economic and industrial interests with which we associate the Party opposite are laughing at us for producing a scheme by which the National Debt can be reduced, by which taxation can be reduced, by which the cost of production can be reduced, by which, without increasing wages by a single sixpence, wages can be materially increased in their real value. Instead of smiling at us," ended MacDonald, "they ought to receive us with open arms."

The first statement which he made upon the problems of peace after his return to the House formed part of a speech delivered three weeks after Parliament first met. In that speech, MacDonald reiterated the need for a peace of consent, of friendliness, and stressed the danger of a peace based upon force.

"We want real peace," he declared in a peroration that drew cheer after cheer from his delighted followers, "until we can get peace which is peace and contentment, a peace of wholehearted acquiescence, a peace which means cooperation in the attempt to arrive at a wise and fruitful reconstructive policy, we cannot

be satisfied we have done our duty. Whilst we have this mixing up of military sanctions and economic aims, whilst one day a statesman talks about reparations and the next day about military occupation, the whole fundamental conditions upon which a peace such as I have in mind must be built up, are being rucked up every time a wise man goes to lay a substantial boulder in the foundation."

The opening Session of the new Parliament was a matter of days only, but it sufficed to quicken interest all over the country in the Labor Party just when years of the Coalition, and sham fighting, were tending to make British politics duller than they had been for a century.

With characteristic energy, MacDonald utilized the Christmas adjournment to deliver a number of speeches in cities as far apart as Cardiff and Aberdeen. During this campaign the voice of calumny was definitely stilled. In place of opposition, he found crowded halls and overflowing meetings which reflected the desire of the electors of Britain to see the new Leader of the Opposition, to hear his voice, to listen to the policy which was carrying this new party from success to success.

MacDonald referred to the secret of that growth in one of his first speeches—at Kilsyth, near Glasgow. "I can see the strength of the Labor Party when I look at it in the House of Commons," he said. "I see in a seat behind me one of the most successful lawyers, whose name is in the newspapers nearly every day. Alongside him is a man who, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, was born in the pit. There is one man of vision, and another man who has felt the error of life. They are all men of enthusiasm drawn from all classes. We in the Labor Party have more experience at our command, more knowledge, more mature thought, more men who have served on public bodies than any other Party. From the point of view of public representation you have the finest Party that the House of Commons contains."

Speaking at an I.L.P. demonstration at the Holborn Empire, London, a day or so before the opening of the new Session in February 1923, he said, with reference to the Labor Party policy



on finance, that they contended that taxation was so distributed that the rich paid far less than their share, and the poor far more. When income-tax got up to ten shillings or even fourteen shillings in the pound the residuum left in the pockets of the very rich was still sufficiently great to enable them to show abominable extravagance, but yet, under the conditions of taxation, it was impossible to raise taxes to get much more from them. When the people had to be taxed for a yield of seven or nine hundred millions per annum no Chancellor of the Exchequer could possibly adjust the weight of the taxes from the bottom to the top to make them equitably imposed on all classes downwards."

"The first duty of a Labor Chancellor of the Exchequer," continued MacDonald, "will be to pay off a very large and substantial part of the debt in order to reduce taxation, and in order that it may be equitably imposed. That means the Capital Levy. We intend this shall be raised. It is no secret. I have been meeting some of my friends on the Front Opposition Bench, and we have decided to ask for a day in the new Session, so that the whole thing will be properly discussed, on a resolution drafted by us, and voted upon by the House of Commons."

A week later the indefatigable leader had carried the fiery cross to Cardiff, where, speaking at a crowded meeting in the Cory Hall on February 18th, 1923, he surveyed, in ringing phrases, the past, present and future of Labor as a political force.

"We are going through a great testing time," he declared. "Are we worthy or are we not? What do you want to know of a great political party? First of all, you must have principle—you never can build a great party that lives from day to day. A party that is to carry on progress for a generation or more is a party that must have caught up from the old parties those parts of their life that did not die with them, but were handed on to the future generations for a wider amplification, for a more successful carrying into effect."

The Labor Party, MacDonald added as he unfolded the vision in his mind's eye, was not created in 1900—though it might have been born at that date. The Labor Party was the heir of all the

Liberal opinion that was hammered out before it. It was heir of all the experiments that were made in the nineteenth century; it was the heir of the thought, of moral achievements, of the ideals and the conditions that the Radical Party made possible, that the Liberal Party made possible, and the Nonconformist movement made possible.

"A great party," continued MacDonald in a memorable passage, "can never be a pettyfoggish party, and it can never be a party that looks more to the past than to the future. I honor my dead by trying to fulfil their purpose. Take questions like housing, unemployment, old age pensions and treatment of ex-Service men. We are in some respects, especially on all the big questions that can only be solved by a new conception of social organization, intellectually superior to the other parties, because we are more up-to-date. We have used the experience of the years gone by with more effect. We will not reach perfection, but we will approach it."

He went on to make a bold claim for Labor:

"It is a renewal of the vision that we want, and that is what the Labor Party is doing in the minds of the people of this country now. My claim is not that we understand ex-Servicemen, or the unemployed, or the houseless, or the homeless better than the Liberals or the Tories; my claim is that our experience is such that when we see the ex-Servicemen neglected it means more to us than it means to the millionaires; when we see the old women and the old men, after long years of affectionate family companionship, separated, that means more to us than it means to the most sympathetic wealthy man or woman. My claim is that the experience of the men and women in the Labor movement is of a kind that it means far more to us than it means to any class of society that is looking on and deploring its ravages."

Commenting on this speech, one of the most striking that Ramsay MacDonald delivered during the first year of his second period of leadership of the Parliamentary Labor Party, a South Wales Liberal newspaper said: "Mr. Ramsay MacDonald could not fail to be impressed by the warmth of the welcome given him at Cardiff on the occasion of his first public appearance in the City

since the election which restored him to the leadership of the Labor Party in the House of Commons. And in the course of an exhaustive survey of the political situation he must have satisfied all his hearers on one point at least, namely, that if he fails as leader of the Labor Opposition, it will not be for lack of zeal, earnest effort, enthusiasm, and a high sense of his responsibilities. So much must be conceded, even by those who belong to other parties."

Back from this speech-making tour of the country, Ramsay MacDonald made two important speeches in the House of Commons, dealing with International Security and the Capitalist system.

Moving a resolution dealing with Peace and Reparations, with especial reference to the occupation of the Ruhr, MacDonald restated, in the course of a powerful speech, his views on European security.

"Take our own situation in all these matters. Curiously enough the one country that seems to be forgotten by so many of our people to-day is our own country. We have all sorts of sentiment about this country and that country, but who is facing the position that this country is getting into in relation to any other? Who? I refer to the political relations, the military relations. It is all very well for Hon. Members to assume that we are out of the picture for a moment, that we are in the stalls or in the pit or in the gallery, while the great European play—I hope it is not to be a tragedy, though it looks very much like it—is being played on the stage. That is an absurd position. We are on the stage and we cannot get off the stage.<sup>1</sup>

"What have we found over and over again? We have never found some creation of the devil appear in human form and declare a war. That is not how things are done. We find, we have always found, and we will find again, that there will be a nice gentle little trickle of events, and we shall launch ourselves on it; we will be quiescent and we will go down, and the trickle will get bigger and the current will get stronger, and we will go on and on until at last we are in the rapids, and once we are in the rapids then our sentiments and our ideas and our inten-

<sup>1</sup> Hansard, March 6th, 1923.

tions may be what we like, but over the waterfall we will go, whether we wish it or not.

"The thing which is happening to-day is the beginning of a new series of chapters which may culminate in war unless we are very careful. Our position to-day is this. The military balance in Europe is changing; the political balance in Europe is changing, and at the moment, so far as my correspondence goes, and as far as I can read the situation, we are rather out of it. We have very little influence. Nobody is looking to us for a lead, and, as a matter of fact, we are in a position which would enable us to give a moral lead to Europe if we only had the courage to lay down our position and stand by our position through a few months, probably, of misunderstanding.

"I believe," declared MacDonald, "with a little courage, this country could place itself right at the head of these moral forces which must come into the forefront in Europe, if European problems are to be solved. When one looks around about trying to find somebody who is doing that, one's best patriotism feels outraged by our own silence and our own quiescence.

"At the moment," he continued, "it is not the history of to-day, or to-morrow, which is being written, but the history of the next fifty years. You begin now, you choose a certain path now, you start a new European diplomacy now with certain great presumptions in its mind as to certain merits of certain plans of action. Ten years from now you cannot undo that. You still remain the mere puppets of events, and events are going to write the issues of your history."

After pleading that the question of Security for France might be referred to an all-inclusive League of Nations, and remarking that he would be willing to accept the recommendations of that body after the whole problem had been examined and understood, Mr. MacDonald added:

"My last point—and I come back to it again and again—is this, is the great dominant factor of the events of to-day. What is happening now is not for this week, not for next week, nor for this year or next year; what is happening now is a series of events that are going to fructify, and fructify, and fructify, until at last the whole course of our history, more particularly the history of our international relations, for the next fifty or seventy years is going to be determined by what



happens within the next few weeks. It is not a question of France and Germany, but a question of Europe. In fact, it is not very difficult to see that America, too, has got to come in, so that it becomes really a question of the world. A month or two ago, everybody was rather chary and unwilling to admit that we were going back again to worship in the Temple of Mars. We said so often, 'The war is going to end all wars'; we had said so often, 'The victory of the Allies is not going to be used merely for the protection of the Allies, but is going to be used as the foundation of peace,' that we were rather shamefaced when we had to say, 'Let us prepare for the next war.' We are getting less shamefaced now—less shamefaced. Those dust-covered altars in the Temple of Mars are being put into better order and given a more respectable appearance, and we are just going away back to exactly the frame of mind we were in before 1900, when we started to explore the world for alliances in order to establish a balance of power and get security by armed force."

In view of the policy which he was to carry out as Foreign Secretary, within twelve months, the closing passages of this speech are of striking interest:

"Can Honorable Members imagine anything more fatal to constitutional government than a Parliament that sits quietly by when so many events, pregnant with fate, are taking place, doing nothing to guide them and mold them in a moral and wise direction? We have come here—at any rate, some of us have come here—to try and make this House of Commons an institution of power, of respect, and of authority. If that cannot be done, what happens? The country is deprived at once of the only means by which it can go from one stage to another of well-considered organic experiment and organic change. Here is the test. Here is the chance. Not with more sincerity than the Government—I do not claim that—but with more freedom than the Government, we can exchange our views with France and Germany. We can stand as a Parliament consulting French opinion, Belgian opinion, ultimately German opinion, and deal with that important thing, the foundation of all wise international action, namely, international good feeling. That is our function. That is our field of action, and I move this Resolution, as I believe that the time has come for Parliament, working in the field of public opinion, to do its duty to Europe, and

only as far as it does its duty to Europe, will Europe have any guarantee that peace is going to be secured for the next generation."

The second speech was made on March 20th, when the Labor Party moved its famous Motion that the Capitalist System had failed, and that the time had come to introduce a Socialist régime. The Resolution was drafted in the following terms:

"That, in view of the failure of the capitalist system to adequately utilize and organize natural resources and productive power, or to provide the necessary standard of life for vast numbers of the population, and believing that the cause of this failure lies in the private ownership and control of the means of production and distribution, this House declares that legislative effort should be directed to the gradual supersession of the capitalist system by an industrial and social order based upon the public ownership and democratic control of the instruments of production and distribution."

The Debates on this Motion were more important, and occasioned greater interest among members of all Parties, than any other of the year. Never before had the Socialist creed been so exhaustively examined on the floor of the House of Commons. The very fact that it was so examined then was evidence of the political revolution which the Labor Party had accomplished, the extent of which can be judged by any one who remembers how, only a few years before, any one professing to be a Socialist was dismissed as a "crank." Yet here was this "cranky" idea raised in the Assembly of the nation, not by a handful of members, but by the second largest Party in the House of Commons, with the official Leader of the Opposition as their spokesman.

Ramsay MacDonald's contribution to the Debate on Capitalism reveals the faith of the crusader.

"Capitalism must always secure insecurity—insecurity of labor, insecurity of supply," he declared before turning to discuss the questions which had been asked in the course of the debate.

"What are you going to do when you take over industry with all those wonderful men who apply their brains to our foreign markets? Does

the Rt. Honorable Gentleman who asked that question think that we shall kill them? We shall keep them at their jobs. What happens to-day? Does the Rt. Honorable Gentleman (Mr. Amery) believe the statement that their wonderful agents are their own employers? Of course they are not, because they are as much the paid servants of the company that employs them as the staff he employs at the Admiralty are the paid servants of the State. Would the Rt. Honorable Gentleman like to run the Admiralty as a private venture, and if not, why not? The fact of the matter is that the business brain of the community is hired by the capitalist, and it is not the capitalists themselves.”<sup>2</sup>

“I object,” said MacDonald, in another passage, “to the human spirit being limited and confined in its freedom by embattled economic power such as capitalism affords to-day. Why, we have not got a whiff of Liberty yet. The great mass of our people are not free to choose a destiny for their children, and to live lives that would be good lives. The great mass of our people are not free to say what they like and to think what they like. I object most strongly to this denomination of materialism, which is capitalism, over life, absolutely. Moreover, what is the great problem of production, to begin with? What is the appeal of capitalism for more production? Absolutely nothing at all. My Right Honorable Friend told us, earlier in the day, that he wanted a society based upon thrift, upon income, and that sort of thing. He did not describe capitalism when he used those words, he described a purely fanciful state of society. Capitalism cannot appeal to people to produce on a basis of property because 99 per cent of our people have no property worth talking about. We cannot appeal to them, we want some stimulus much different from that. The Honorable Member for the City of London referred to Georgia. I wish I could tell fully a very touching, very illuminating experience I had when I was there. I went to the mines, up in the Caucasus, which had just been nationalized. Before that they were the scene of turbulence. Production was going down, and lawlessness and disorder were rife. They had settled down and were quiet. I asked the leader of all the troubles what was the difference between the old state and the new. He said, ‘In the old state we used to work from here’—touching his shoulder—‘to there’—pointing to the end of his pick—‘because then we worked for capitalists. In the new state, when we think of the children who are enjoying our coal in Tiflis, we not

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, July 16th, 1923.

only work from the shoulder to the pick, but we work with our heart as well.'

"I am one of those people who say to the Honorable Members opposite that until you can enlist the soul of your worker you are neither going to have duty nor amplitude coming from his efforts. Capitalists cannot lift the man up to that; they may give him big positions and managing posts, but this is gross materialism which moth and dust do corrupt and thieves break through and steal, and until society has discovered that fine, impalpable, spiritual effort, it will never solve this great problem of production. So far as one can see, nothing can do that except Socialism. Capitalism will never do it."

Mr. MacDonald concluded his speech by quoting from an article written by his friend, Lord Morley, when resigning the editorship of the *Fortnightly Review*, which contained this sentence: "We shall need to see great schools before we can make sure of powerful parties. Meanwhile, whatever gives freedom and variety to thought and earnestness to men's interests in the world, must contribute to a good end."

"That is my creed, that is my faith," declared MacDonald. "That is why I am in favor of Socialism."

In view of the political situation, more than usual interest was shown in the Address which Sidney Webb delivered as President of the 23rd Annual Conference of the Labor Party held in London in June 1923.

That Address, one of the most cogent and reasoned statements of Labor policy ever enunciated by a prominent member of the Party, was, especially in the passages dealing with the after-problems of the war and Labor's Foreign Policy, a reflection of MacDonald's views at the time. Some of the more striking passages in it may fittingly, therefore, be included in this chapter.

After reviewing the successes which had followed "a decade of persistent, an often heroic work," Mr. Webb said: "Let us now turn to the grave problems with which the nation is confronted."

"At the root of all our present troubles is the state of warlike tension from one end of Europe to the other, which is plainly the outcome of the



unsatisfactory treaties by which the war was ended. The historian of the future cannot fail to record that Paris, in 1919, was a factory of international inefficiency on a quite calamitous scale. To-day this inefficiency is patent to all men. Nearly five years has elapsed since the Armistice. But the necessary complicated economic organization of Europe as a commercial whole has not yet been restored; food surpluses and raw materials in one part can only with the utmost difficulty be exchanged for the products of labor in other parts; indeed, all sorts of additional barriers to the free movement of goods, persons and communication have been set up; we have not yet got even anything like a unified system of transport across the political frontier lines that have been fantastically drawn across the map of Europe; among the peoples penury and privation almost universally prevail; even the mere material damages to the fields and factories of France and other countries have not been made good. Never perhaps in all history has there been so impressive a failure as that of the statesmen to whom the world of 1919 entrusted the task of making a real peace.

"What was the cause of this failure? It has been said, with a great deal of truth, that the blunders embodied in these treaties were the direct result of what is termed in theology an invincible ignorance. In spite of all the knowledge and wisdom with which their official subordinates provided the 'Big Four' these great men apparently could not divest their minds from the idea that they were free to choose, irrespective of the hard facts of the situation, what they presumed to think was politically the best for their several countries or for themselves. Certainly, we of the Labor Party hold that the treaties failed because, almost from end to end, they ignored, on the one hand, economics, and on the other hand, morality. I confess to the simple faith that morality, like economics, is actually part of the nature of things; and, in great matters and in small, whenever we fail to take into account the nature of things, our calculations and arrangements are inevitably brought to nought. But where the world itself went most wrong in 1919, and I think that all countries must share the blame, and the great majority of their citizens, was in the spirit with which the problem was approached. We can all see now that Europe could no more be rebuilt upon the passion of hate, the passion of greed, and the passion of fear than upon anger and violence. And neither hate nor greed, neither fear nor violence is brought more into accord with the requirements of economics or of ethics merely by being national instead of individual.

"I say to-day that we ought, as a nation, to come out of our nationalist illusions of this kind. It is high time that we based our foreign policy not on what we presume to think our rights, but on what we can discern to be the common interests of the world; not on national hatred, national greed, or even national fear, but on a sense of brotherhood with all men; not on what we may hope to make out of other nations to our own profit, but on how, with our peculiar gifts and special opportunities, we can best serve humanity as a whole. And as all the nations now discover they are in a very real sense members one of another, we shall find that brotherhood in whatever best serves humanity as a whole will be, in the long run, most conducive to the interests of each. What the Labor Party stands for is a policy of mutual service, as contrasted with a policy of the deliberate pursuit of profit for self—it matters not whether the self to be profited be the individual at the expense of other individuals, or the nation at the expense of other nations."

Turning to Labor's foreign policy, for which Ramsay MacDonald was so largely responsible, Sidney Webb made the following declaration—of great importance in view of the political events of the forthcoming twelve months:

"Such a foreign policy would promptly assert for this country that leading position in the concert of Europe which the present Government has abandoned. It would tell France plainly that we will go no step further with her in what seems to us a fatal policy of aggression, arising, as it seems, from what the psycho-analysts would call a 'fear-complex' unworthy of a great nation. It would accept with cordiality the willingness of the German people, provided the claims to extravagant war indemnities are withdrawn, to make good, up to the limit of economic capacity, the material damage inflicted on the mines and buildings of France and Belgium, and to compensate the civilian victims of bomb or torpedo. It would, for the sake of a general settlement, waive all further claims, and press for a universal cancelation of inter-government war debts. It would convert the League of Nations into an organization absolutely world-wide, seeking to make it in its own sphere as continuously effective as is the International Postal Union. Such a policy would aim persistently and wholeheartedly at the earliest possible restoration to economic prosperity of all the nations of the world, including, as a matter of course, those with whom we were lately

at war. It would make continuously for an ever-progressing common limitation of armaments. In my view, it would inspire our advocacy, within the League of Nations, of the establishment of some practical international currency and some uninterrupted machinery of international remittances, possibly by the intermediation of the International Postal Union itself. It would work towards a universal suppression of customs and passport barriers; or at least their subordination to the far superior interests of unhampered inter-communication; and, assuming that the political particularism of the different States forbids at present a European Customs Union, at least for the establishment of a completely unified railway and canal administration from Astrachan to Algeciras, with undisturbed and untaxed passage of all goods and passengers merely in transit. And along with such an economic policy, there might be urged upon the Governments of Europe the adoption of a common policy of education in internationalism, in elementary schools and universities alike, in substitution for the ludicrously false history and economics still inserted, in the supposed interests of patriotism, in the school books of the world."

In another passage of his Address, the President of the Conference laid down his famous policy of the "inevitability of gradualness," which has since that date held the field as the evolutionary aim of the Labor Party in home affairs, and of which Ramsay MacDonald is a leading exponent. This declaration has gained an added importance, as a tenet of Labor's creed, through the attacks made upon it by a section of the Party, particularly by the Independent Labor Party, which raised the counter-cry of "Socialism in our time." Indeed, it may justly be said that to this declaration of faith in "gradualness," enunciated at the Party Conference in 1923, and supported by MacDonald, dates the beginning of the personal breach which became definite when the I.L.P. refused to nominate MacDonald as a member of the I.L.P. delegation to the Party Conference in 1927.

Turning to "certain general features of our position to-day," Sidney Webb said:

"First let me insist on what our opponents habitually ignore, and, indeed, what they seem intellectually incapable of understanding, namely the inevitable gradualness of our scheme of change. The very

fact that Socialists have both principles and a program appears to confuse nearly all our critics. If we state our principles we are told 'That is not practicable.' When we recite our program, we are told 'That is not Socialism.' But why, because we are idealists, should we be supposed to be idiots? For the Labor Party, it must be plain, Socialism is rooted in political Democracy; which necessarily compels us to recognize that every step towards our goal is depending on gaining the assent and support of at least a numerical majority of the whole people. Thus, even if we aimed at revolutionizing everything at once, we should necessarily be compelled to make each particular change only at the time, and to the extent, and in the manner in which ten or fifteen million electors, in all sorts of conditions, of all sorts of temperaments, from Land's End to the Orkneys, could be brought to consent to it. How any one can fear that the British electorate, whatever mistakes it may make or may condone, can ever go too fast or too far is incomprehensible to me. That, indeed, is the supremely valuable safeguard of any effective democracy.

"But the Labor Party," he continued, "when in due course it comes to be entrusted with power, will naturally not even want to do everything at once. Surely, it must be abundantly manifest to any instructed person that, whilst it would be easy to draft proclamations of universal change, or even enact laws in a single sitting purporting to give a new Heaven and a new Earth, the result, the next morning, would be no change at all, unless, indeed, the advent of widespread confusion. I remember Mr. Bernard Shaw saying, a whole generation ago, 'Don't forget that, whilst you may nationalize the railways in one afternoon, it will take a long time to transform all the third-class carriages and all the first-class carriages, into second-class carriages.' Once we face the necessity of putting our principles first into bills, to be fought through Committee clause by clause; and then into the appropriate administrative machinery for carrying them into execution from one end of the Kingdom to the other—and this is what the Labor Party has done with its Socialism—the inevitability of gradualness cannot fail to be appreciated. This translation of Socialism into practicable projects, to be adopted one after another, is just the task in which we have been engaged for a whole generation, with the result that, on every side, fragments of our proposals have already been put successfully into operation by Town and County Councils, and the national Government itself, and have now become accepted as commonplaces by the average man. The



whole nation has been imbibing Socialism without realizing it! It is now time for the subconscious to rise into consciousness."

Ramsay MacDonald took the opportunity of elaborating and stressing this point of view, on the occasion of a speech at South Shields at the end of July, in which he replied to some remarks about Socialism made by Stanley Baldwin shortly before.

"Socialism is going to be run as a bogey," he declared. "The Prime Minister shows in his speech that he has made at least one discovery. He finds there are two kinds of Socialists—there is a good kind of Socialist and a bad kind. That is an advance, for at the General Election there was only one kind of Socialism and it was bad. What he has not yet discovered is that the good kind of Socialist is predominating. His definition of the bad Socialist, the bogey Socialist, is that he wants to make a change in a minute. He defines him as one who teaches that by a sudden transformation you can enter upon a heritage where, for less work and for more pay, you will get conditions of greater comfort than have ever been known in the world.

"I would like the Prime Minister, or any one who champions him," added MacDonald, "to take up any book, article, or speech by any leading Socialist and base a definition like that upon anything he finds there. It is a fair challenge, and I defy the Prime Minister or any of his Ministers or responsible propagandists to extract, without doing violence to the contents, any statement made by any of us that justifies that description."

Speaking at the miners' gala at Durham the previous day, Mr. MacDonald had referred to the threat of trouble and depression in the coalfields, already casting its dread shadow over our greatest basic industry.

"One of the lessons we have learned," he said at a great open-air demonstration on the Durham race-course, "is that you cannot have an industrial fight without taking it to the House of Commons. The other side does not like that. I see the Prime Minister said yesterday that people are getting into the habit of going to 10 Downing Street. If you get into trouble on your coalfield,

deputations go to 10 Downing Street. Well, where are you likely to go to? At the same time the Prime Minister said that every trade dispute, whether a strike or lock-out, injures the community. We know that perfectly well, and have said so. But if the community does not see that every section in it has justice done to it, then the community should not grouse and grumble when the section tries to get justice done for itself.

"What does the Prime Minister mean? Does he mean that strikes and lock-outs are to go on with the House of Commons, representing the political and industrial life of the nation, sitting supinely apart and saying 'That is not our job. Let them fight it out. Let the millionaires meet the men with 30s. or 40s.' There is no equality between the men, on the one side, and the employers, with their accumulated bank balances and credits, on the other."

The political event of the autumn of 1923 was Mr. Baldwin's sudden plunge into Protection, which precipitated the second Tariff election of our time, and, as the event proved, not only robbed the Conservative Party for a period of a comfortable majority, but paved the way for the formation of the first Labor Government some years before even its most optimistic supporters could have expected such an event—certainly before Ramsay MacDonald himself expected it, as his comment in the speech (recorded in the previous chapter) which he made upon accepting the leadership of the Party in the previous year, clearly shows.

MacDonald, on behalf of his Party, accepted the challenge at a luncheon held at the Hotel Belgravia, London, on November 1st, 1923, before a gathering which included members of the Trade Union Congress General Council and of the National Executive of the Labor Party, in addition to Labor M.P.'s and Labor candidates.

The opening passages of this speech were noteworthy for the sympathetic reference which he made to the lamented death of Bonar Law shortly before. In a graceful tribute which revealed sympathies surmounting the barriers of party politics, MacDonald

said: "I am sure I am speaking for my colleagues when I say that during the time we have known him we have learnt that there is something more important as a bond between man and man than political opinions.

"I myself have never sat on the same side of the House as Mr. Bonar Law. I cannot remember a single great question on which I agreed with him. I remember how in his younger days he often used to make us angry, but his personality was enriched by sorrow, and the strange feeling grew up that he was somehow winding himself round our hearts. We felt him to be the type of man who in singleness of heart and purity of purpose was spending himself at the call of public duty.

"The memory that we have of him will always, I think, make it impossible for us to crush out human charity by political divisions, and make it impossible for men who are called to the House of Commons to decline to perform their duty because their hearts are heavy and their burdens are anything but light."

The speech, coming at the outset of the General Election campaign which resulted in Ramsay MacDonald going to Downing Street and accepting the unprecedented double burden of the two greatest offices of the State, is important as a statement of his views at that time.<sup>3</sup> Here I will quote only one point from his pronouncement—the passage in which he stated Labor's policy towards the Protectionist issue:

"Protection is not a cure, it is a diversion—a magnificent method of side-tracking a great movement. Under it you will, of course, have again bribery, corruption and log-rolling. We know what happened in the House under the Safeguarding of Industries Act; I have never known such lobbying. All this will be going on while the poor simple-minded working man drifts hither and thither, and now and then an industry will be spurred up by Protection, and they will say that the millennium has come. When we last fought this cry of Protection, it was fought on negative issues. We propose to do that no more. The fight we are in now is not Protection versus Free Trade; the fight we are in now is Protection versus the Labor program."

<sup>3</sup> For full text see "Labor's Policy versus Protection." Appendix F.

"There is not a single nation in the world," declared MacDonald in another striking passage, "which is running its industry under Protectionist conditions which has not got precisely that problem of the normal unemployed. Protection never has solved that, and never will."

The point in Labor's program which attracted most attention at the General Election of 1923, and to which MacDonald paid most attention in his own speeches, was the proposal for a Capital Levy.

Speaking at a great meeting at Bristol on November 20th he dealt at length with this proposal.

"What is this terrible thing, this Capital Levy? It is a very simple thing. The trouble about the Capital Levy is that, poor thing, it can quite easily be misunderstood and misrepresented."

"Each twenty-four hours," continued Mr. MacDonald, "one million pounds is taken out of national production in order to pay the interest of your debt. You are asked to believe by Liberals and Tories that that does not matter. You are asked to believe by the Labor Party that it does matter. The Labor Party says if one million pounds per day, counting Saturdays and Sundays as full days, are to be taken away from national production, diverted from the ordinary round of production, changing itself into capital, capital changing itself into production, and so on—if one million pounds per day is so diverted from ordinary industrial operations—employers can say what they like, financiers can say what they like, politicians can say what they like—that is a burden on industry that is damaging industry."

"While this great debt is upon your shoulders," continued the speaker, in a challenging passage, "it absorbs in the payment of its interest so much national wealth, such a high income-tax, so much indirect taxation upon your food, upon your sugar or tea, that the great humanitarian expansive causes—the ideals brought down from heaven to this earth—we cannot afford them because debt lies upon us as a first lien, reducing our national income.

"What does it all amount to?" he added. "It amounts to



this: that if we pay debt, if we say, as we propose to, that every person owning over £5000—not per annum but an accumulation of £5000—every person of that position, and everybody above it, shall render to the State a certain proportion of their wealth in order to enable the State to pay off a substantial part of this debt. Am I a confiscator, or a thief, or a purblind politician? The effect of the matter is this: the very people who are being conscripted are people who, according to their own claims, are paying the debt.

"If I get my income-tax, and have to pay, say, £20 to the State every year, I say to my accountant, 'Would you work it out and tell me what part of that £20 I pay per annum owing to the fact that I am responsible for part of the National Debt?' If he says, 'You are paying for a capital indebtedness of £100,' then I go to Somerset House and say, 'Look here, I don't want my capital to be messed up in this way. I don't want you to send me every year an account for £20; £10 of that, I am told, is my share of the National Debt, capitalize it, multiply it by £20, or whatever it is—say it is £200—there is my share of the National Debt; and in future send me in my income-tax paper less the charge on that sum.

"I am told that employers are going about saying: 'If there is a Capital Levy I am going to close my works; I cannot go on, it is absolutely impossible.' It is said that it will disturb industry and destroy confidence. If you pay your debts to your neighbor, has your neighbor lost confidence in your financial integrity?

"That is the explanation of the Capital Levy. That is the explanation of the idea underlying it."

At the end of his speech, MacDonald referred feelingly to his first visit to Bristol, thirty-eight years before, which is recorded in the first chapter of this book.

"1923, and I stand here with this wonderful moving crowd in front of me. In 1885 I stood in a public place in Bristol and three people came to listen. Ah! who will say that there is not something like the finger of Providence in all this. And how



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# THE FIRST BRITISH LABOR CABINET, 1924

(Left to right, seated) William Adamson, Lord Parmoor, Philip Snowden, Lord Haldane, J. Ramsay MacDonald, J. R. Clynes, J. H. Thomas, Arthur Henderson. (Standing) C. P. Trevelyan, Stephen Walsh, Lord Thomson, Viscount Chelmsford, Sidney Webb, Lord Oliver, John Wheatley, Noel Buxton, F. W. Jowett, Col. Josiah Wedgewood, Vernon Hartshorn, Tom Shaw



little the other side understand us; how little! How small is the vision that they direct upon us, we, the expression of a great uprising of the human spirit, never old, never satisfied, never finding a permanent habitation in any of the stable habitations that men build, but always like the Bedouin, sleeping in tents that he folds up in the morning in order to go on his pilgrimage. But, my friends, I see no end of the journey. We have come, we shall journey, and we shall go, and our children coming after us will go on with their journey, and their children will go on with theirs. And, my friends, what you and I have to take care is that the journey is both onward and upward."

In the course of this election campaign Ramsay MacDonald demonstrated once more the fact that his shoulders are broad enough to bear honorably any burden which his position as the leading figure in the Labor Movement may place upon them.

Whatever opinion may be held of the Capital Levy proposal, men of all parties admitted that MacDonald was their most formidable opponent in placing that proposal before the country. In energy, in eloquence, in the respect which is the world's tribute to sterling honesty of purpose, he stood out among all the figures of that fight.

To the suggestion that if once a Capital Levy was imposed it might be repeated, he retorted in his Election Address, issued at Aberavon: "In view of the gross misrepresentation that is being made I give the most emphatic assurance that a Capital Levy would not, because in the nature of things it could not, be imposed twice; that every penny of it would be used for the reduction of debt, and none for ordinary expenditure, that the object would be to relieve industry of its burdens and to enable our trade to be more effective in the world."

And at the end of the campaign, he still stood four-square for the proposal.

"In my desire to show how completely I believe in the Levy," he declared at Port Talbot on December 3rd, "I have stated that the working out of the scheme could be safely left to the Treasury officials, but to my amazement I have found that state-



ment represented as a weakening in my opinion. I have not weakened, and shall not weaken until a better project has been produced."

Four hundred and twenty-seven officially endorsed Labor candidates went to the poll on December 6th, and the results showed a slight increase in the Labor vote as compared with a year before, the total rising to 4,348,379. This time, however, the Party profited by the reaction against the Tories on the Protectionist issue, which helped the Labor candidates to victory in many constituencies where there were three-cornered fights. Of the 144 seats held by Labor at the Dissolution, 128 were retained, and sixty-three further seats were won, making the total of the Parliamentary Labor Party 191, or nearly one-third of the total House of Commons. Ramsay MacDonald himself was returned for Aberavon by a majority of nearly 4000 in a straight fight with a Conservative opponent.

The big increase in Labor's representation did not, however, tell the whole story of the Conservative defeats. The re-united Liberals had also won heavily, and as it was reasonably certain that Asquith would join with Labor in carrying the verdict of the country to its logical conclusion—a note of no confidence in the Conservative Administration on the floor of the House itself—the question "Who shall govern us?" became an urgent and hotly debated question on the morning after the results were known.

Mr. MacDonald pointed the moral of the Election in a speech made at Elgin on December 22nd.

After declaring that every one knew that the most likely alternative to the Conservatives was a Labor Government, he said: "I appeal to the nation very solemnly and seriously, not only for the forms of the Constitution, but for the spirit of the Constitution, for fair play and for plain dealing. Had it not been for the constitutional action of the Labor Party again and again in the face of all sorts of demagogic and revolutionary temptations the nation would not have been able, perhaps, in tranquillity and joy to enjoy Christmas and the New Year Recess. I tell you

plainly that the price of the continuation of that tranquillity is gentlemanly and honest politics."

The Labor Party, as he had declared, would take office if asked to do so, and if the circumstances arose. Why? Because they were agreed that the country would be all the better for experience of a Labor Government, and because they believed that in international affairs the Labor Party would have more authority in establishing conditions of peace and justice than any other Party in the country.

They would take office because in dealing with unemployment they believed they had a program, ideas, and a power that no other Party possessed. They would take office because they believed they were in a better position than either the Liberal or the Tory Party to advise on a policy that would benefit agriculture without sacrificing the other interests of the State. Finally, the Labor Party would take office because it believed that until the financial position of the country was honestly faced there was absolutely no chance for a national revival of industry and commerce.

The circumstances in which Ramsay MacDonald was called upon to form a Government are now history. The responsibility for what was called at the time a "great experiment" rested upon the shoulders of Mr. Asquith, the Liberal leader, who declared that if the experiment of a Labor Government were to be tried, it could not be introduced under safer conditions than those of 1924, when no Party in the House had an absolute majority.

For that decision the Liberal Party suffered heavily at the succeeding Election, and it is only just, therefore, that the courage which caused Asquith to ignore any possible "shuffle" should be recognized. His critics presumably regard the first Labor Government as a failure. They have not, I imagine, troubled to think of the effect which any other course of action would have had upon a Party which had for years previously been told that revolutionary measures were unnecessary in a country in which real power was exercised through the ballot-box. In the opinion

of the writer any attempt to cheat the Labor Party of its right to form a Cabinet in 1924 would have brought this country to the brink of a constitutional crisis more perilous, and more lasting in its reverberations, than anything we have faced for a hundred years.

But if Ramsay MacDonald, and the country generally, expected a Labor Government to take office, there were influences within the Party against such a course until Labor had the power of a majority with which to back up its proposals.

A writer in close touch with the inner circle of the Party at the time has placed it on record that at an informal luncheon which took place on the Monday following the declaration of the poll, attended by "a fairly representative collection of those who claim to express the mind of the Party," the feeling was at first against taking on the task of forming a Government.<sup>4</sup>

"The only argument for taking on that any one produced was for a purely spectacular action—a King's Speech comprising a Socialist declaration, on which we should at once go out. This was hailed with approbation."

"Mr. MacDonald appeared"; continues this account, "for a few moments he listened. Then he proceeded to riddle this case with such effect that its exponents had, almost while he was speaking, crossed over, most of them with the belief that they had, in fact, been there all the time. To stay out for the sake of a strong platform position was mere cowardice; to go in for the sake of coming out, worse: a fatuous gesture. To run up a flag in order that it should be shot away, with the knowledge in our own minds and in those of our opponents that it was to be shot away, was the emptiest form of play-acting. Were our responsibilities confined to words? Were there not things to be done that needed doing, and that we knew how to do? Everything hinged upon a European settlement; was it not a primary duty to try and secure it? Moreover, apart from that, would

<sup>4</sup> "Iconoclast," in *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (1923-1925). Leonard Parsons, 1925.

we kindly consider what was to happen to the Party if it refused? It would lose even the Opposition.

"At the end of half an hour the entire scene was changed. Apparently unaware of the revolution in their minds that had been produced, without any explicit statement from Mr. MacDonald, those who had before been descanting on the superior charms of the wilderness, were absorbed in the question of who was to be the Foreign Secretary."

For the Labor Party the hour had come. For Ramsay MacDonald the day of vindication of the peace policy for which he had labored during the years in exile was about to dawn.

And yet, as events proved, in the moment when the people were reading that the miracle had happened, that the King had asked Ramsay MacDonald to form a Government, the arrangement contained within itself the seeds of its undoing. At Elgin, a few days before, MacDonald had warned Asquith that "no Party with any sound principles in which it sincerely believes, is going to take office as a sort of kept Party by another section of the House."

Yet that was precisely what Labor's position must be without a majority. The cruel inexorability of Fate condemned them to it. There was no alternative, except one; and that Labor disliked more than its uneasy hold upon national affairs.

"God knows full well none of us wants office now," MacDonald declared at Elgin; "none of us wants to face the mess; but somebody has to do it. Somebody must do it in the national interest. I believe that no greater calamity could overtake this country than that we should go back to those sham-fighting politics, that we should go back to those coalitions which have discredited public life ever since they have been tried."

"If we go into office, we shall go into office as the Labor Party," Mr. MacDonald declared in the closing words of that speech. "We shall go in trusting upon our principles. If one section or another vote against us, they can do it and bear the consequences. We shall lay down proposals which we believe are practical, which we believe the nation requires, and we shall appeal to



Liberal and Tory alike to choose that day whom he is to serve—serve his Party, serve his class, serve his interests, or come out and serve the great mass of the people that compose the backbone of the nation.”

Facing difficulties and dangers as grave as any that ever challenged the intelligence of a British political party, Labor began the great experiment.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GREAT EXPERIMENT

**H**AD the Labor Party been in a position to choose the moment when it should undertake its first period of office without power it would not have selected 1924.

The political position was still overshadowed by the grave problems arising out of the war years and the great trade slump of 1920. Unemployment was in its fourth winter, and the economic reactions of the stagnant pools of idleness in our industrial centers were being increasingly widened. Wage reductions had been followed by rumors of strikes. The housing shortage was growing more acute as time passed without any real attempt to cope with conditions which condemned masses of people to live in tenements so overcrowded and insanitary that neither health nor decency could be preserved. In rural England farmers and laborers were alike crying out that existence was becoming impossible.

Abroad there were crises looming up in Ireland, Turkey, Egypt, India and Iraq. Europe, despite Peace Treaties, was still split into opposing camps. The black troops of France occupied the Ruhr in opposition to the feelings of her former Allies. Germany was still licking her wounds in isolation and, beyond Germany, Russia went her way as cut off from the rest of the world as an inmate in a leper colony.

Truly there was work for Labor to do. Equally truly, a minority Government, dependent during every hour of its existence upon the support of others, who were not aiming at the same goal, would have to leave undone many things which the more enthusiastic of its own followers, without the knowledge of the limitations of the position, would consider should be undertaken without any concessions to the feelings of those outside their own ranks.

If many within the Party did not appreciate the difficulties of the task which MacDonald and his Ministers had undertaken, Labor's Prime Minister was under no illusions. If the hour was not of his choosing, nevertheless he was ready. This was the moment for which he had been working and waiting ever since the days of the Labor Representation Committee; for which he had traveled the world, so that he might speak with the voice of authority.

Despite the desperate problems, both at home and abroad, with which it was faced, there was a certain appropriateness about the advent of the first Labor Government. It came just a century after the liberty of industrial organization had been secured by law in this country; just sixty years since the first International Working Men's Association was formed; fifty years after the first Labor Member entered the House of Commons, and twenty-five years since the day when the Trade Union Congress had voted in favor of an organized working-class political party.

On one thing MacDonald was determined from the beginning. Britain needed a new outlook.

In the Debate on the Conservative Address which was followed by the defeat of the Baldwin Administration, and MacDonald's advent to power, he had declared: "To-day the state of Europe is far nearer what it was in 1912 than any one cares to think about—rival armies, rival nationalist policies, expenditure of enormous sums of money—not in reconstruction, but in preparing again for destruction; nations that were allies glaring across at each other with only semi-concealed hostility. That is the sort of thing that needs wholehearted binding together of men and women of goodwill of all parties to try and prevent it, and to try to bring back to it the sane, serious, solemn influence of this country in order that a new leaf may be turned over, with better prospects for all the peoples of Europe. We want new minds to deal with these problems. We need very skilful handling of the diplomacy which arises out of them. We want the objective observation of other people's susceptibilities and at the same time a friendly, firm, emphatic assertion of our own interests. We want a European

outlook at the back of it all, and given that, I do not despair of Europe yet."

Those who had pictured Labor's Cabinet-making as a series of arguments between rival sections received their first surprise within a week of MacDonald's audience with the King. The Prime Minister decided to keep his own counsel until his plans were completed, and in order to ensure freedom from interruption and the advice so freely showered upon him from all quarters, he went north to his native Lossiemouth, there to ponder over the many problems which had arisen as soon as the decision to take office had been made. Pressmen followed him, of course, but they learnt nothing. The oyster is but a poor imitation of a Scot keeping his own counsel, and MacDonald is silent, even for a Scot.

It has been said that "when the Cabinet first met, most of its members were but recently aware of their own posts, and ignorant of their colleagues."

Two problems, in particular, needed careful thought—the Foreign Office and the arrangements for adequate Labor representation in the House of Lords.

Mr. MacDonald's decision to combine the two greatest offices of the State, to undertake the twin-tasks of the Premiership and the Foreign Office, meant the shouldering of a Herculean burden.

Sir Robert Peel, more than half a century ago, declared that the duties of a Prime Minister, who is expected to supervise the work of all Departments and conduct business in the House of Commons at the same time, was becoming an impossible burden for one man. More recently Sir Edward Grey has said that the burden of the Foreign Office needed superhuman energy. Could any man combine these two offices and live?

It is difficult, in retrospect, to suggest any alternative which would have been equally satisfactory. All his life foreign affairs had claimed MacDonald's first interest. He brought, by general admission, the best-equipped mind in his Party to the task of laying the war specter in Europe and paving the way to a real peace based on friendship and disarmament.

There was an additional reason for combining the two offices



which may have influenced him in coming to the decision which he took. Parliament had recently witnessed the unhappy results of a Cabinet in which the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary did not see eye to eye upon important matters of policy. The result had been a lowering of Britain's prestige abroad. The restoration of that prestige as a bulwark of international peace was the first task to which MacDonald set his hand, and his position was enormously strengthened from the start by the fact that he spoke with the authority of the supreme Minister of the State.

In assessing the result of the ten months' work which was to follow, these factors must be taken into account. Unfortunately MacDonald shouldered a greater burden than any man can carry without driving himself to a complete breakdown. By October, when it was vitally necessary for the Party that its leader should be fresh and fit for the fight, MacDonald was a tired man. In the election campaign of that month, the effects of the strain he had undergone were clearly apparent. It is, however, at least permissible to suggest, even in an unbiased account of this controversial episode in our political history, that what Labor lost the nation gained during months when the prestige of this country in the Chancellories of Europe was higher than it had been at any period after 1918.

The second immediate problem was the House of Lords. The whole Labor Party, from MacDonald downwards, was united in opposition to the hereditary principle. But the King's Government must be carried on, and to conform to the accepted conditions of the experiment, Labor needed spokesmen in the Upper House.

Faced with this constitutional problem, MacDonald solved it by appointing three members of the House of Lords—Lord Haldane, Lord Parmoor and Lord Chelmsford—to offices of Cabinet rank, and by elevating three other members of his Government to the peerage. These were C. B. Thomson, who became Air Minister, Sydney Olivier, Secretary of State for India, and Sydney Arnold, Under-Secretary for the Colonies. Had the Prime

Minister deemed it necessary to reply to the purists within his own Party who disliked even this modest concession to the admitted needs of the situation, he could have pointed out that the three new Peers were men without heirs, and that the hereditary principle was not, therefore, involved by their presence in the Upper House. I do not suggest that this fact governed their promotion, but it was certainly taken into consideration during those quiet reflections at Lossiemouth.

Commenting upon the task of Cabinet-making at a later date, Ramsay MacDonald declared: "It is easier to create a revolution than to make a Cabinet, and if I had a second shot I would rather have a revolution than the responsibility of making a new Cabinet; but I am not going to do that. We did our best, and on the whole we have been justified in doing what we did."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. MacDonald's statement of Government policy was made in the House of Commons on February 12th. The occasion was of the utmost importance, the atmosphere electric. He was meeting the House for the first time as Prime Minister, and his speech was a considered declaration of the policy which would inspire his Cabinet during the months ahead.

"No Prime Minister has ever met the House of Commons in circumstances similar to those in which I meet it," he began. "For the time being, no party in this House has a majority. The party opposite is the largest of the three, but on account of the circumstances of the Election, it is impossible for this House to ask them to remain in power. As the second party, the Labor party has accepted the responsibility of office. I think that that will necessitate some alteration in our House of Commons habits. I think that we will have less to say about party and less to think about party than we have had hitherto, and that we shall lay more and more emphasis upon the responsibility of individual Members of this House of voting as responsible members of the House and not merely as party politicians. That is all to the good as far as this House is concerned."

After declaring that "The country, sooner or later, would have to become acquainted with the driving hand of Labor, and I am

<sup>1</sup> Speech at I.L.P. Conference, York, April 21st, 1924.

very glad that it has come sooner," Mr. MacDonald went on to characterize some of the stories afloat at that time, to the effect that, "we were bound, being Labor, to destroy the nation, destroy its credit, make capital fly off in a state of wild excitement and terror and so on" as "sheer rubbish." "I hope that the experience which the country and the Empire are to have of the Labor Government will make it absolutely impossible for any such statements to be made or any such ideas held," he added.

"There are two very large questions which any Government coming in now must strive to handle, or, at any rate, conceive in a large way." Mr. MacDonald defined Labor's Housing Policy, and then came to the crucial problem of unemployment.

"Now there is the other question, the question of Unemployment. Here, again, we are faced with a problem at which, in my view, we have hitherto rather nibbled. Two things have to be secured, and these we are working at: first, work; secondly, an effective income which is being supplied by the scheme of insurance if work cannot be provided. I think that is roughly the situation. There is not the least doubt that whatever Government faces the problem of Unemployment ought to face it, first of all, with the idea of putting the unemployed men back in their own work. Therefore, in so far as the Government can influence trade, that should be its first point of attack. Consequently, we shall concentrate, not first of all on the relief of unemployment, but on the restoration of trade. We are not going to diminish industrial capital in order to provide relief. I saw the other day one of those periodical attacks upon us, by people who really do not know what they are writing about—attacks which assume that our only conception of capital is that we should raid it, distribute it for consumption, and so bring the nation to bankruptcy. I wish to make it perfectly clear that the Government have no intention of drawing off from the normal channels of trade large sums for extemporized measures which must only be palliative. That is the old, sound Socialist doctrine, and the necessity of expenditure for subsidizing schemes in the direct relief of Unemployment will be judged in relation to the greater necessity for maintaining undisturbed the ordinary financial facilities and resources of trade and industry."

Regarding agriculture, the Prime Minister continued that the question of rating relief for farmers must be tackled.

"Government after government has promised to deal with this subject, and I have not the least doubt has tried to deal with it, but has failed. The Labor Government is going to make an attempt. The whole question of rating is due for revision—not for farmers, but for everybody. The Government proposes to bend its attention to this subject and hopes, with a fair amount of luck—before it will be time for it to leave these benches, and either transfer to those opposite, or go to the country—it will have produced its scheme for readjustment and reform. No interest in the country would benefit more from a rating based on scientific principles than the agriculturist, the farmer who is farming his own land, and who is not going to be charged with rates for improvements upon it. So far as we are concerned, we shall not touch tariffs nor bounties. Both tariffs and bounties are wrong. They only help to encourage inefficiency. They induce the towns to regard agriculture as something which preys upon them. They cannot be confined to agriculture and agricultural produce alone.

"What agriculture requires is a stimulus to fight its own battle," Mr. MacDonald added. "I was talking to an eminent agriculturist only the other day, and the remark he made to me was this—'If we could get all our agriculturists to farm as efficiently as the twenty-five per cent at the top, there would be very little agricultural problem in this country.' That is the spirit and the line on which the Government proposes to work, and therefore we select cooperation as the best means for aiding, developing and stimulating the agricultural industry."

Turning to Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister said:

"I have one further word to say, and that is about Foreign Affairs. In that connection I must explain to the House that, when I had to consider whether I would or would not take the Foreign Office, the thing that weighed with me most of all was this: Foreign Affairs, the relations of this country with Europe, and the position of this country in Europe, had become so unsatisfactory that I believed it would be a great advantage if, whoever was Prime Minister was also Foreign Secretary, in order to give the weight of office to any sort of policy that one might devise. I do not know if I was rash or not, but in the end I decided that, for the time being, at any rate—until some of the preliminaries were cleared away, and prospects got a little better, I would venture to unite the two offices, and I will do my best to carry on both, on the



clear understanding that as soon as I feel that I can relieve myself of the one, I shall do so."

The Prime Minister then made the following definite statement, of importance in view of the forthcoming events concerned with the granting of credits to Russia. "The question of credits would be proposed by the Russian Government, and not by us, but I have no intention of going any further, as far as Government credit is concerned, than Overseas credit, trade facilities credit and such things as have already in principle been approved regarding other countries by the House of Commons, and I have no reason to doubt that it will be quite adequate."

In the closing passages of one of the greatest speeches heard in the House of Commons since the war, the world had the spectacle of a practical idealist tackling the problems of everyday life with an inspired appeal which swept over all barriers of party, creed and class, and claimed the assistance of every man and woman of goodwill:

"The Government will concern itself with what it considers to be great national and international interests which it will present to this House from its own standpoint. Coalitions are detestable, are dishonest. It is far better, I am perfectly certain, for the political life of our country, and for the respect in which we desire to be held by colleagues who disagree with us, that we should express our views as an independent political party, bring those views before the House of Commons, and ask it to take the responsibility of amending, accepting, or rejecting them. Therefore, from our own point of view, we shall bring before this House proposals to deal with great national and international problems, and we are not afraid of what fate we may meet in the process. If we wind up this week, if misfortune befall before the week comes to an end, we shall have made our mark on the history of these islands, and we shall have done something, in the recognition of Russia, towards the beginning of a new European policy.

"In the new attitude towards France we shall have started a fresh and successful exploration of problems that, had they not been taken in hand now, probably would have proved themselves insoluble and, in consequence, the nations of Europe would have been doomed to go

through once more the horrible operations of armaments and war. This country requires stimulation in its hopes; it requires to settle down to trade and development. It requires to be given courage and confidence, so that it may use its latent power, and above all, the common man and the common woman must be brought into the partnership of national prosperity. The unemployed, the partially unemployed, all must be taught that when we are talking here of national greatness and prosperity, we mean them to share that greatness. We mean them to be partners in that prosperity, and unless we can assure them of that we shall never be content that we are doing our duty. I have ventured to appeal to everybody, whatever their class or function may be, that at this time of irrational timorousness, when pessimism and optimism are striving for mastery, I appeal to everybody, I appeal to the House, to go out with hope, to go out with determination, to go out not for tranquillity, but for security and confidence based on good will, and to be just and worthy of respect. In that spirit the Labor Party propose to act."

In the same week the Prime Minister amplified that statement in a conversation with a representative of the French paper, *Le Matin*, in the course of which he declared that in his relations with France, and in his general foreign policy, his diplomatic strategy would "consist in walking straight in front of him."

Whatever differences of opinion there may be about the achievements of the first Labor Government, few will deny that it began well. It is significant of the change in public opinion towards its leading figure, and of the growing prestige which Ramsay MacDonald enjoyed during that surprising year, that his speech at the Albert Hall on January 8th, delivered after the Party had resolved to take office, was the first of his utterances to be reported verbatim throughout the Press.

A connected account of the achievements, the errors of omission and commission, and the changes in Parliamentary and public opinion, which make up the tale of 1924 would need a larger volume than this. It is probably still too early to form a just opinion of the achievements, for it is even more true of Governments than men that "the evil which they do lives after them," while the good effects are promptly claimed by their successors as

their own unaided achievements. Thus the results of that short-lived MacDonald Government are still being garnered in the growth of a new spirit in Europe; in Housing—the majority of the subsidy houses built during the last five years have been erected under the Wheatley Act, although Conservative speakers sometimes forgot to mention the fact during the General Election campaign of 1929; and in the realm of Pensions, to mention but three fields of administrative activity in which the record of the first Labor Government will certainly not fear the verdict of history.

During the nine months that it remained in office, Bills and measures were introduced dealing with such diverse subjects as Unemployment Insurance, Rent Control, Traffic, Housing, Agricultural Wages, Old Age Pensions, the Hours of Labor and pre-war Pensions.

These Bills formed only part of the real work of the Labor Government. There were in addition their achievements in the administrative field—the results which they secured by the simple fact of attaining control of the machinery of government in Whitehall. And there were also the three things with which Ramsay MacDonald's tenure of office as Foreign Secretary will always be associated—the London Conference, his policy towards the League of Nations, and the Russian Treaties.

This book is concerned with Mr. MacDonald, and I therefore propose to deal at length with those matters concerning which he has personal, and not merely collective, responsibility.

Before turning to Foreign Affairs, however, a brief survey of the record of his Government in other directions will not be out of place.

"No Government has ever done so much to aid the unemployed as Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's Ministry," declared the Labor Party in a pamphlet issued after the fall of the first MacDonald Government. Labor's first act in handling unemployment was to abolish the restrictions which prevented (1) single persons residing with relatives, (2) married women, (3) short-time workers and (4) aliens, from obtaining the grant of uncovenanted benefit.

The next step was to abolish the "gaps" of three weeks which former Governments had made necessary after twelve weeks' unemployment pay; and a new Act was passed extending the period of benefit from 26 to 41 weeks. This accomplished, the Labor Government introduced legislation which increased the weekly rate of unemployment benefit from 15s. to 18s. for men, and from 12s. to 15s. for women, besides raising the allowance for dependent children from 1s. a week to 2s. a week.

Turning to the more important considerations of preventing unemployment and finding work for the unemployed, the Labor Administration cannot point to an equal record of achievement. There may have been reasons for this failure—one important fact bearing upon the matter I shall deal with later. Whatever the circumstances, the Labor Party evidently realized that failure it was, for after leaving office a statement was made that "the limitations imposed by the existing system of industry and finance are more important in this matter than in regard to unemployment relief."<sup>2</sup> They could, however, point to a reduction of the unemployed from 1,285,625 on December 31st, 1923, to 1,041,800 on July 21st, 1924, a decrease of 243,823, or considerably greater than the decrease which their successors achieved during any similar period of six months since that date.

As might have been expected, considering how much hinged upon industrial peace, and the unique authority which the members of MacDonald's Government could exercise over their industrial colleagues, the time wasted by strikes during 1924 was considerably less than in preceding years. Admittedly this happy result was due as much to the absence of any great industrial turmoil as to other causes, but as the anti-Labor Press thought it fit to accuse the Labor Government of being unable to handle its own followers, and talked of an increase in industrial disputes, the official figures may fairly be placed on record.

The following table shows the number of working days lost during the first phase of Labor's term of office and during the same period in three preceding years:

<sup>2</sup> "Labor's Great Record": Labor Publications Department.



February to June 1921.....	78,916,000
February to June 1922.....\.....	18,579,000
February to June 1923.....	4,292,000
February to June 1924.....	2,712,000

In its Election Manifesto, the Labor Party had promised "generous provision for the aged people and widowed mothers, and sick and disabled citizens." This pledge was redeemed, in part, in Mr. Snowden's Budget, which provided for an increase to the full amount in the Pensions of about sixty thousand people then drawing reduced pensions, and bringing within the scope of the Pensions Act over a hundred and fifty thousand people who formerly were not entitled to any payment.

"Over a hundred and seventy thousand old people are now benefiting under the reforms introduced by the Labor Government," declared the Labor Party at the end of the experiment.

Turning to ex-Service Men's Pensions, Labor recognized the nation's debt in a number of reforms. The one that must surely have been received with the greatest measure of thankfulness was the provision of money for ex-Service men who had been treated as "pauper lunatics" under former Governments, so that their care could be paid for out of public funds.

"Final awards" were stopped, so that any pensioner who became worse in health due to war service could appeal for an increase in pension at any time. "Need Pensions" were raised, and the minimum rate made 5s. instead of 4s. 2d. and the basis for these need pensions was raised to 25s. a week for one individual and to 35s. a week for a married couple. The result was that every parent or dependent in receipt of a need pension received an immediate increase of between 2s. 6d. to 5s. a week, at a total cost to the State of £240,000 a year.<sup>3</sup>

I have already referred to Mr. Wheatley's Housing Act. In this matter Labor took a bold line. Mr. Wheatley's scheme provided for the erection of two and a half million houses within a period of fifteen years. An important feature of the scheme was

<sup>3</sup> See "Labor and War Pensions": Labor Publications Department.

an arrangement made to secure an adequate supply of labor for this great program. "On this point," Labor afterwards claimed, "only a Labor Government could have secured agreement with the Trade Unions and provided the guarantees which the unions—with their experience of unemployment and broken time in the trade—could accept as a satisfactory protection for their members."

Simultaneously with this attack upon the housing scandal, Bills to prevent profiteering in materials for building, and dealing with town-planning, were introduced.

An example of the way in which the Labor Government utilized the powers conferred upon Ministers by their predecessors in office is afforded by their actions in the important field of Public Health.

Believing that "prevention of disease is the best economy," the Labor Government, as soon as it took office, issued a circular (No. 474) which removed restrictions on grants for health services. This enabled the immediate extension of welfare schemes for maternity and childhood, the appointment of additional health visitors, the provision of more beds in homes for mothers and babies and the opening of about seventy new infant-welfare centers.

An outline of how the grants for health services were increased is shown by the following figures:

		<i>Under</i>
	<i>1923-24</i>	<i>Labor Government</i>
Maternity and Child Welfare....	£ 754,961	£ 830,000
Tuberculosis .....	1,233,521	1,380,000
Venereal Diseases.....	284,920	340,000

"Speeding up rather than damping down," education, by a restriction in the size of the classes, improved school buildings with increased floor space per child, and the withdrawal of permission to use uncertificated teachers in elementary schools, was the policy of Labor in education—a policy which caused a Liberal newspaper to declare, "No finer monument to a Labor Govern-

ment could well be imagined than the lifting up of the whole standard of education for the mass of the people in this country."

This brief survey of the policy and achievements of the MacDonald Administration covers only a few of the manifold activities of his months of government. There were other important measures and men. I have not mentioned the work of J. H. Thomas at the Colonial Office—admittedly one of the most successful of MacDonald's appointments—nor the work of Noel Buxton as Minister of Agriculture. The important tasks undertaken by Arthur Henderson at the Home Office, and Sidney Webb as President of the Board of Trade, the many problems concerned with the Defense Services and the Treasury—these would amplify the picture, but they would not change its essentials. For in the first Labor Government only three factors counted in the final reckoning—foreign affairs, unemployment, housing. These were to be the real test of MacDonald's statesmanship, the rest were trimmings—valuable, even vital, but still minor issues besides the cardinal importance of inculcating a new spirit into our relations with Europe, and doing something for the overcrowded, workless populations at home. Two of these questions have been dealt with. For a consideration of the third we must turn once more to an examination of Ramsay MacDonald's personal record as Foreign Minister.

MacDonald's first action as Foreign Minister was the recognition of the Russian Soviet Government, and machinery was at once set in motion for calling an Anglo-Russian Conference to consider outstanding questions which since the Armistice had hindered the establishment of friendly relations between the two nations. This Conference met in April and later on drafts of a General Treaty and a Treaty on Commerce and Navigation were prepared.

A question greater than our relations with Russia, however, was the quarrel between Germany and France arising out of the French claims to Reparations.

MacDonald at once turned his attention to the task of creating a more friendly atmosphere, with a view to the calling of a Con-

ference at which the representatives of France and Germany could meet under the neutral and helpful chairmanship of the British Prime Minister.

"My first task was to create a healthier atmosphere," declared the Prime Minister. "I had to make a gesture and wait to see if it was responded to. It is these psychological things that are far more important than beastly clever dispatches, however politely handled by ambassadors to ministers, which are, nevertheless, thrown like bricks at their head. Our diplomacy must be perfectly straight and absolutely frank. It must be considerate, only asking for a similar response on the part of the other side. France has nothing to fear from any policy that we may pursue. We may not be able to agree with everything that she does. We do not expect her to follow our desires. But nothing ought to arise between us, and I am sure nothing will arise between us, but what goodwill and honest dealing can settle. We must consider such problems as Reparations and the Ruhr from the point of view of France, Great Britain, and Europe, and do everything to find a satisfactory agreement. Above all, we must both remember that time is running a tragic race against us."

On February 25th Mr. MacDonald informed M. Poincaré, the French Prime Minister, of "certain difficulties with which I am faced." After a reference to the fact that the economic existence of Great Britain had been "gravely endangered," the Foreign Secretary pointed out that the result was that:

"The people in this country regard with anxiety what appears to them to be the determination of France to ruin Germany and to dominate the Continent without consideration of our reasonable interests and future consequences to European settlement; that they feel apprehensive of the large military and aerial establishment maintained not only in Eastern, but also in Western France; that they are disturbed by the interest shown by your Government in the military organization of the new States in Central Europe; and, finally, that they question why all these activities should be financed by the French Government in disregard of the fact that the British taxpayer has to find upwards of thirty million pounds a year as interest upon loans raised in America, and that our taxpayers have also to find large sums to pay interest on the debt of



France to us to meet which France herself has as yet neither made nor propounded, so far as they can see, any sacrifice equivalent to their own."

Mr. MacDonald went on to suggest that whereas France "conceives of security as security against Germany alone," Great Britain desired "security against war." An agreement upon fundamental aims, continued this outspoken "Note," would clear the air and pave the way to an understanding.

"It is on such a basis that I should wish to discuss with you our outstanding problems. If we can achieve agreement on the main principles which inspire us, and if these principles can be explained to our respective peoples and to the public opinion of the world, then I have little doubt that the many subsidiary problems, intricate and thorny though they have become, will not prove impossible of solution. If, on the other hand, we allow ourselves to be entangled in the mass of detail which has arisen around such situations and problems as the Ruhr, the Rhineland, and the Palatinate, then our ultimate objectives will again become obscured, and we shall relapse into the old wearisome round of controversy and altercation on points that may be important but are not fundamental."

The man who had been preaching a peace of negotiation and consent since 1914 was at last to show what he could do by that method. There were many, even within his own Party, who prophesied that he could do nothing. "Sentiment" and "brotherly love" are not practical diplomacy, declared his critics, not realizing that MacDonald has one of the most practical minds in modern Europe and that while his head might be in the clouds, his feet were securely grounded on Mother Earth.

The public generally, however, clutched at the hope he was bringing to Europe, as a few years before they had been inspired by the declarations which President Wilson had issued from the White House. There was the same moral authority in each case. Happily, the analogy did not go further. President Wilson, for reasons now well known, failed to justify many of the hopes he had aroused in the hearts of millions then caught in the toils of

the war juggernaut. Ramsay MacDonald carried his policy through and sat in the saddle long enough to show that it worked.

At the end of April 1924 he visited his constituency and was greeted everywhere by cheering crowds. "It was by no means entirely a party demonstration," stated the *Daily Telegraph*. "People of all shades of political opinion welcomed the Prime Minister."

Mr. MacDonald acknowledged that fact in the opening words of a speech which he made at Briton Ferry.

"I want to say this, that I am proud if I have had anything to do, or have helped in any way, to get the country to feel that with any Government of man's making, of men and women who have toiled for their living and whose incomes have been their wages, foreign affairs, home affairs, national interests, are as well looked after as any other Government can look after them. If I can do that with your help, I feel that a great contribution will have been made to the democratic government, not only in this country, but to the democratic government of every self-governing state in the world."

Turning to Foreign affairs, he declared:

"First of all, I want to establish peace. Sometimes you will read that I am not interested in security. What frightful nonsense it is! It is the thing I am most interested in. I want you to feel perfectly secure that no son of yours, no grandson of yours, will ever be asked to go through what I see by your badges many of you have gone through. I cannot do that by merely talking peace, by merely preaching peace. I cannot do it by merely arguing in favor of peace and against war. Therefore, with this in my heart as it is, I can only do it by creating such a condition of affairs in Europe that it will be quite unnecessary in times to come for any nation to bring the bugle to its lips. Peace? I cannot get peace unless I also get this. I want friendship. We can sign a document together, you and I, a document of partnership, but if there is no friendship that provides the ink with which that document is written, the document is limited in its effect. As the years go, the ink will fade, until one day you will find nothing has been written at all. The agreement is broken. The two parties that signed it are at enmity. How are you going to provide against that?"

"I see that some of my friends talk against sentimentality and spirituality and all that sort of thing. The one thing that matters in this life is the spirit. If you do not lay the foundations of your house from bricks made from the spirit, great will be the destruction of that house of yours. The thing we have not yet discovered, the thing we are too cowardly to face, is this very simple thing that there is more security to be found by a policy that creates friendship, active vital friendship, than in a policy that is wise and austere and is written down: 'Whereas 1, 2, 3, therefore, and so on.' That thing does not last, and the other thing does, and the great contribution that a Labor Government—more particularly a British Labor Government—can make to the security of the world, to the peace of the world, is to begin first of all not with grand programs, but to establish a condition of friendly relations."

Before a definite Conference could take place, M. Poincaré's Government fell, and in May the French General Election brought into power a Government of "the Left," pledged to work for peace, and presided over by M. Herriot.

After this, events moved swiftly. M. Herriot visited Mr. MacDonald at Chequers, and the British Prime Minister visited Paris. The result of this interchange of visits was agreement to call a Conference in London in August, where the outstanding problems between France and Germany, and particularly the danger-spots—Reparations and the Ruhr—could be frankly discussed. Further, MacDonald secured the assent of the French Government for the presence of German representatives as negotiators of a settlement.

The main object of the London Conference was to examine what was called the Expert's Report on Reparations, popularly known as the Dawes Plan. On July 16th representatives of all the Allied Nations met in London. On August 5th the Germans arrived. A few days later the London Settlement was signed.

The bald dates do less than justice to the brilliance of MacDonald's diplomacy throughout. Several times in the course of the negotiations a breakdown was imminent. MacDonald had determined that he would erase the word failure from his vocabulary. Yet in the first week in August it looked as though even he

could not prevent the Conference being abandoned in confusion.

A final effort was made, and on August 16th the Settlement was signed. It contained a scheme for putting the Dawes Plan regarding reparations into operation, and, more important, an agreement for the evacuation of the French troops from the Ruhr, where their presence had for months been impeding any approach to an understanding. Further, the Settlement secured the restoration of the economic unity of Germany, the French and the Belgians agreeing to withdraw their customs barriers within German territory, as soon as the Germans had passed the laws permitting the establishment of the organization for the Expert's plan.

At the closing meeting of the Conference, Chancellor Marx of Germany and the Prime Minister of France shook hands—the first time that official representatives of the two peoples had done so since the Armistice.

The pride of that moment, with its vindication of the very policy for which he had endured persecution during the war, shines through the phrases of the speech which Mr. MacDonald made at the closing session:

"I believe we have given Europe something better than an agreement drafted by lawyers and printed on paper—we all negotiated, discussed, put ourselves in each other's shoes. That is the greatest advance we have made. We are now offering the first really negotiated agreement since the war; every party here represented is morally bound to do its best to carry it out, because it is not the result of an ultimatum; we have tried to meet each other as far as the public opinion of the various countries would allow us. . . . This agreement may be regarded as the first Peace Treaty, because we sign it with a feeling that we have turned our backs on the terrible years of war and war mentality."

His credit for this achievement was freely admitted by those who spoke after him that day. "The greatest part of the result is due to him," was the trend of their praise. "The settlement with France is a brilliant feather in his cap. To have succeeded where Bonar Law, Baldwin, and Lloyd George failed is a considerable achievement," said the *Daily News*.



But it was only a beginning. "We must go on, step by step, with out work of peacemaking and of restoration," said MacDonald on that day.

He was already "going on" with it. While steering the London Conference to success, Arthur Ponsonby, his Under-Secretary, had been negotiating with the Russians in London.

This was likely to prove a more difficult problem than even the Franco-German Agreement. Public opinion in Britain, while veering round to the view that trade with Russia should be encouraged, was still under the influence of what may be termed a "Bolshevik-complex." On the other side, the rulers of Russia had been pouring out their venom upon the "bourgeois" British Labor Party and its leaders without ceasing.

With the coming of MacDonald to power, the Devil's chorus in Moscow increased in strength. The trend of the contemptuous references to British Labor which the Russian Government has indulged in for years past is well known, and no further examples are needed here to convince reasonable people that MacDonald had no tender feeling in his heart for the present rulers of Russia when he resolved to make an effort to bring that great European people back into the comity of nations. But, as a footnote to later events, one quotation from the *Pravda* is not without interest. This is an extract from a speech which Zinovieff made at the opening of the Fifth World Congress of the Communist International. "Our party in Britain," declared Zinovieff, "must even now fight against MacDonald, because, when later on the masses become convinced of his baseness, they will remember that we Communists have said this long ago." Zinovieff added that he considered Ramsay MacDonald to be the British Krensky, a traitor to the working class, a puppet in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

Such an outlook could not be considered promising, but MacDonald and Ponsonby persevered, and M. Rakovsky, the Russian Chargé d'Affaires in London, showed more tact and courtesy than did his Government in Moscow.

By August 4th differences had been partly overcome. A partial

arrangement had been reached between M. Rakovsky and the British holders of Russian bonds, by which they might expect to receive back some portion of their money invested in Imperial Russian Bonds, which the Bolshevik Government had originally repudiated. It looked as though the Prime Minister were going to collect another "feather for his cap." And then came apparent failure. The Conference broke up without agreement, and a communiqué reporting the breakdown in negotiations was issued.

That seemed to be the end, but the differences were by that time more apparent than real, and the following day it was possible to reassemble the Conference and, by the use of a new formula, clear away difficulties and reach agreement. This sudden change of front, following the intervention of certain Labor M.P.'s identified with the more extreme section of the Party, led to charges that MacDonald had been forced to make a settlement against his own judgment; bluntly, that those in his Party who held different views about Communism to his own had "called the tune" and he had obediently danced to their measure.

As statements of this sort were to be leveled against him in the General Election, which was eventually made necessary as much by the feeling in the House of Commons against the Russian Treaties as by the adverse vote on the Campbell prosecution, it may be well to state what actually happened, as recorded by a writer in close touch with the Labor Movement:

"The much-advertised interposition of 'back benchers' amounted to no more than a timely assistance to a renewal of touch that would anyhow have been accomplished. Pressure they certainly did not exercise. None was needed at the British end. Mr. Ponsonby throughout had a stronger position than M. Rakovsky, inasmuch as he knew that the British Cabinet was wholeheartedly for peace, whereas M. Rakovsky's delegation represented elements in Russia not too anxious for cooperation with governments. Mr. Ponsonby was able, therefore, to report to the Prime Minister, at midday of August 6th, that agreement was reached on a formula which by then had been 'passed' by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. His difficulty in the House of Commons at night was that the Treaties incorporating that agreement had not yet emerged

in printed form from the draftsman's hands. He could, however, report to the House that agreement had been reached and two Treaties were ready for signature."<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Ponsonby has himself over and over again related the facts, and recently restated them in a letter to the Press from which I quote the following passages:

"I have done my best to dispel the fog of misrepresentation which hovers over the negotiations, but in vain. I have written a paper for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, relating exactly what happened hour by hour on the last days before the agreement was reached, I have written articles in various papers, I have written letters to *The Times*, two correcting errors by other correspondents. . . . The intervention of Members of Parliament at the last moment had nothing whatever to do with any of the provisions of the Treaty, but was merely taken advantage of by me in order to induce M. Rakovsky to resume negotiations which had been suspended on a very minor and obscure point."<sup>5</sup>

The two Treaties which incorporated the Agreement reached were a commercial treaty, under which Britain received "most favored nation" status, extending in return the Export Credit Scheme of 1920 to Russian trade, and a General Treaty, under which the Russian Government acknowledged for the first time that the claims of the British bondholders should, within certain conditions, be met.<sup>6</sup> When these had been settled on prescribed lines a third Treaty was to be drafted. Failing settlement, there was to be no third Treaty and no extension of Government credits for the purpose of encouraging British traders to do business with Russia. Upon the signing of the third Treaty, however, the Government undertook to recommend to Parliament that they

<sup>4</sup> "Iconoclast," in *James Ramsay MacDonald* (1923-25).

<sup>5</sup> *The Nation*, May 4th, 1929.

<sup>6</sup> These claims, according to a statement made by Mr. MacDonald in the House of Commons, amount to:

For Properties .....	£180,000,000
For Bonds (sterling) .....	40,000,000
For Bonds (rouble) .....	Roubles 250,000,000
For Miscellaneous Claims .....	£40,000,000

Hansard, July 7th, 1924

should guarantee the interest and sinking fund of a loan to Russia.

It should be noted that none of the Treaties proposed a loan by the Government to Russia, although, as Labor afterwards claimed, they did make the raising of a loan easier.

The statement, freely bandied about during the General Election which followed the resignation of the MacDonald Government, that he had changed his mind between June, when he said "No loan," and August, when he agreed to make one "under pressure," was not correct.

The account of those vital weeks as Mr. MacDonald outlined it to me four and a half years after the events dealt with, was in exact agreement with his report at Manchester on October 15th, 1924.

"In June the proposals that were before me were proposals just to guarantee a loan to the Russian Government. They wanted to borrow money, and they wanted us to guarantee it. I said, 'Certainly not!' What happened since? There was a steady evolution in the nature of the proposal, and it grew and grew. I think in August it was this: that if Russia could borrow upon the market we would guarantee the loan it would borrow—not that we would give the loan, but if the Russian Government found, say, a million pounds on the London market, free for investment in Russia and got the investment, we would guarantee that sum. We would not guarantee two millions; we would not guarantee ten millions; we would only guarantee what the Russians found free upon the market ready to be invested in that loan. That was the first stage.

"The second stage was this. We would not guarantee except under certain conditions. One of the conditions was that no military expenditure should be covered by the loan. And another was this: that nothing should happen, nothing should be definitely fixed, until the British House of Commons itself had accepted the sum, had accepted the conditions, had accepted the guarantee offered by the Russian Government and only then, when the British House of Commons accepted that, would our guarantee become effective."

"I proposed," Mr. MacDonald told me, "to extend to Russia, for the benefit of our traders, the Export Credit Scheme which



had been specifically passed in 1920 to assist British trade. There was from first to last no question of a Government loan being even considered. On the contrary, before even the trade guarantee proposed could become operative, it had to be ratified by the House of Commons, after all the facts had been placed before that assembly."

To that considered statement by the Prime Minister, I will only add that the antagonistic views expressed by the two Opposition Parties regarding these Treaties were by no means unanimous.

"As far as we can see," declared the *Spectator*, "the proposed Treaties will not do any harm to any British interest, must benefit some British interests (such as the Bondholders, who will get something instead of nothing, and the Anglo-Russian trader, who gets a commercial treaty and a defined position) and may, by marking the starting-point of the return of Russia to the amity of nations, do, indirectly, great good. After all, the alternative is not a better agreement, but no agreement at all."

Opposition to the proposed Treaties dragged in abeyance during the Parliamentary summer recess, only to break out afresh and with renewed violence as the moment for their ratification drew nearer in the autumn.

Before meeting the House of Commons at the beginning of the critical session for his Government, Mr. MacDonald showed how strong was his "will to peace," and how dearly he cherished the ideal of international friendship, by breaking into a much-needed holiday in order to attend the Assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva on September 4th.

He went there as a member of the British Delegation, and was thus the first British Prime Minister to speak in person at its deliberations. In a speech to delegates representing fifty-four nations, he outlined, with the authority of the man who was both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the British Government, a policy for achieving the future peace of the world.

"His speech," declared the *Manchester Guardian*, "was exactly the speech that the world has long needed from a British Prime Minister." It may well be that history will take the view that

this speech was the greatest single contribution to the cause of world peace that Ramsay MacDonald has so far made. It will certainly live as one of the major pronouncements of his career. Quotation would not do justice to it, and for this reason I reprint the full text elsewhere in this volume,<sup>7</sup> reproducing here only the peroration at the close:

"Our interests for peace are far greater than our interests in creating a machinery of defense. A machinery of defense is easy to create, but beware lest in creating it you destroy the chances of peace. What the League of Nations had to do is to advance the interests of peace. The world has to be habituated to our existence: the world has to be habituated to our influence. We have to embody in the world confidence in the order and rectitude of law, and then the nations, with the League of Nations enjoying authority, with the League of Nations looked up to, not because its arm is great, but because its mind is calm, and its nature is just, can pursue their destinies in a feeling of perfect security, none daring to make them afraid."

Many of those who listened to those words of hope while the whole world looked on felt that at that moment MacDonald reached the pinnacle of his greatness. But he had been waiting to make that speech, to address that appeal to the conscience of the civilized world, since the far-off days preceding 1914, when he had dreamt the same dreams and only a handful had listened. If he abandoned a holiday and traveled half-way across Europe to enhance by his presence the prestige of the League at a critical juncture in its early history, it was because Ramsay MacDonald was the first and oldest advocate of League ideals among contemporary British statesmen, and he did not shrink from the responsibilities which that fact laid on his shoulders.

The London Conference, the Russian Treaties, the speech at Geneva—these are the milestones on MacDonald's path towards European peace during his first brief period of office. How will history assess his achievement? "Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has been fully equal to the heavy responsibilities of Prime Minister," said the *Daily News* in reviewing his record in Foreign Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix H.

"He has filled the great position with entire adequacy at a time of exceptional difficulty."

"From every quarter the limelight converged upon him and his figure grew, instead of shrinking, under the glare," said another writer. "Europe and America in varying tones congratulated Great Britain on a Prime Minister worthy of its highest traditions and waited for the words and deeds of a man who was pouring new life into the exhausted veins of a continent."<sup>8</sup>

Those two statements are fair examples of public opinion in the autumn of 1924. In this connection I may mention that in discussing MacDonald's diplomacy with me a month or so ago, a well-known British journalist who represents on the Continent famous British Conservative newspapers, expressed the view that in his opinion MacDonald was the finest Foreign Minister that Britain had had for the last fifty years, and that the prestige of this country never stood so high with our neighbors across the Channel as it did in 1924.

With the opening of the Autumn Session there began to gather overhead the first clouds of the storm that was destined to sweep the Labor Government from office before the end of the year.

The Russian treaties provided only the first of many criticisms, from both within and without the Party, and some of them ludicrous in the extreme, which were to undermine the position and prestige of the Government in the weeks ahead.

From MacDonald's own supporters came complaints that the Labor Ministers decked themselves in Court dress when in office. The obvious reply was that the Court was part of the Constitution, and a Labor Government without power could not alter it. Further, in view of the scrupulous courtesy which was extended to members of the Government on all occasions by Buckingham Palace, good manners and a regard for the feelings of the Court were the least return that could be made. In raising this question, certain sections of the Labor Party were guilty of views too petty to be worthy of a great political party.

<sup>8</sup> "Iconoclast," in *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (1923-25).



RAMSAY MACDONALD WITH HIS DAUGHTER JOAN, AT HISTORIC CHEQUERS, COUNTRY HOME OF BRITAIN'S PRIME MINISTERS, DURING HIS FIRST PERIOD OF OFFICE IN 1924





Another question which occasioned widespread discussion was what may be termed the "motor-car incident."

Sir Alexander Grant (then Mr. Alexander Grant), a wealthy Scottish biscuit manufacturer who, like MacDonald, was a Morayshire man, born in a village close to Lossiemouth in the poorest of circumstances, presented the Prime Minister with a motor-car and thirty thousand shares in the firm of McVitie & Price in order to provide an income for its upkeep. Shortly afterwards the name of the donor appeared among the baronetcies granted in the Honors List. Suggestions began to be made that Labor was "selling honors."

The actual facts concerning this incident were as follows. Sir Alexander Grant's father and Mr. MacDonald's uncle had been fellow guards on the Highland Railway, and the two men had been lifelong friends. Sir Alexander had for years been a regular visitor to Lossiemouth, and there his friendship with MacDonald had ripened, despite differences in their political views. After MacDonald took office Sir Alexander learned that the Prime Minister, at the end of tiring days at the Foreign Office and Downing Street, was traveling home to Hampstead by Underground. Often, unrecognized, he was forced at busy times to "strap-hang" all the way to the northern suburb.

Sir Alexander considered it unreasonable that a man bearing such heavy burdens should be forced to travel thus inconveniently, and he declared that his contribution to the Prime Minister's comforts should be a Daimler motor-car. It was the gift of a generous, fair-minded man, made to Mr. MacDonald personally, but also given to a Prime Minister of Great Britain who was carrying a great load without even the modest standard of personal comfort necessary for health.

"I explained," said the Prime Minister, referring to the incident, "that I would have been content with hiring a car, as when I left office I would probably be a poorer man than I had been." "But I will endow it," rejoined Sir Alexander. "Still I was unwilling," added the Prime Minister. "I did not fancy myself as

the owner of a motor-car. It was against the simplicity of my habits. I took a long time to be persuaded, and letters are in existence which reveal the minds of us. In the end I agreed with this arrangement—a sum of money was to be invested in my name and the income I am to enjoy during my lifetime so long as I keep a car, and at my death it is to revert to Sir Alexander Grant or his heirs. This is the full story of the incident.”

Prior to this kind action, Sir Alexander Grant had given the sum of £10,000 towards the founding of a Scottish National Library, and it was for this magnificent contribution to the learning of his land, and other benefactions, that his name appeared in the Honors List. It is well known in official circles that the baronetcy would have been conferred upon him whatever Government had been in office.

The real issue on which the Labor Government fell was the Russian treaties, although the question on which a vote of censure was passed on the Government in the House of Commons concerned another issue—its conduct in relation to the institution and subsequent withdrawal of criminal proceedings against a Communist named Campbell, the editor of *The Workers' Weekly*.

Mr. MacDonald declared that had the downfall of his Government not come on these issues, it would have come before the end of the year on some other question. He definitely accuses Lloyd George of coming to an “arrangement” with Sir Austen Chamberlain and other Conservatives to end an experiment which was making Labor too popular.

“From that day (when the Liberals put Labor into office) they were hostile to us,” he wrote, “and even offensive, and finding that, contrary to their expectation, we were doing good work, they entered into a conspiracy with the Conservatives to turn us out. The facts are very well known to everybody who knows politics from the inside. That is a very important point.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Mr. J. H. Thomas confirmed this version of the defeat of Labor's first Administration in a speech made at Ardwick Green, Manchester, during the election campaign of May 1929. Mentioning that he had made the last speech for his Party before that defeat he continued, “Before I got up I knew there had been a private conference. I knew that Mr. Lloyd George had first seen

I present this explanation of the downfall of the first Labor Administration without debating its strict accuracy, only mentioning that the Leader of the Liberal Party in 1924 was Asquith and not Lloyd George.

The long and bitter debates which took place over the question of whether or not political influence had been exerted in securing the withdrawal of the Campbell prosecution may be found in the records of Hansard for September and October 1924 and need not be quoted here.

A vote of censure was debated on October 8th and resulted in the defeat of the Government.

Speaking in the Debate the Prime Minister declared:

"His Majesty's Government are determined that so far as they can help it, the propaganda of Communism is to have no chance in this country. We are not Communists. We are opposed to Communism. I am perfectly certain that if that Resolution which was carried by such an overwhelming majority in the Labor Party Conference yesterday had been moved in a Tory organization the majority against the admission of the Communists could not have been very much greater."<sup>10</sup>

Mr. MacDonald stressed that the one concern which Labor had was whether this prosecution advanced the interests of the State or not. "But even then," he added, "we issued no instructions. The views expressed, the many views expressed, for the consideration of the officers with technical knowledge and with the responsibilities of office put the burden of a final decision upon them. If this House is going to censure us for that, it has got the power. Two and two are always more than two and one, and if when Honorable Members are counted in the Lobby, we get the combination which we are told we are going to have against us to-night, that is the end of it. I said on a former occasion that we should take advice from this House in the sense of rejection of

Sir Austen Chamberlain. I knew that they had on foot a conspiracy and that before I had finished the case for Labor they had agreed, regardless of what I said, to go into the Lobby together to put Labor out."

<sup>10</sup> See figures given later in this chapter.



the proposals which we made, provided that they are not regarded as essential, and provided that the rejection of our proposal or our defeat in the Lobby did not amount to a diminution of that sense of self-respect which every Government must have if it is justified in sitting for five minutes on the Treasury Bench. I repeat that now. If this House passes either the Resolution or the Amendment now, we go. It is the end; it will be the end of what Honorable Members on all sides of the House will agree has been a high adventure—the end of a Government which, I think, has contributed much to the honor of the country, to our social stability, and which, when the country has an opportunity of passing a verdict upon it, will come again.”

The following day, October 9th, the Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that the action taken by the two Opposition Parties rendered an election inevitable; he had therefore had an audience with His Majesty that morning and asked for a dissolution.

The day before the crucial vote was taken, Ramsay MacDonald delivered the Presidential Address at the Labor Party Annual Conference referred to in his House of Commons speech.

“We believed,” he declared, “that the very fact of our existence would have an encouraging influence upon movements and political ideals similar to ours all over the world. We believe that we should be like genial springtime air, dissolving the frosts, all the hates, all the cruelties, that were keeping back new growths in the hearts and the actions of men. We believed that we could make our country stand for something inspiring and attractive to the other nations. We had no hope of a new world created by Magic. We had hope of the old world beginning to show a response to a new creative spirit. I think we have succeeded in that.”

Referring to the debate on the Campbell case, which was to take place on the following day, when the defeat of the Government appeared probable, MacDonald said: “To-morrow night seven men out of ten will go into the Lobby condemning us, and the next day they will be appointed as judges to consider our case

impartially. Our opponents are to pretend on the one hand that no election is required, and that we shall go on with our work, at the same time as they rob us of the virtue of respect and lay us open to a charge which it is their game to make at the end of this week that when our usefulness as a Government has been destroyed we are mean-spirited enough to cling to office after we had received our death wound. If we go, they will pretend that we have caused the election; if we stay they will accuse us of being limpets on five thousand pounds a year. They propose to drive us into the jails of their Inquisition whilst the special pleaders and the executioners at their leisure prepare the biased indictment, the rack and the block. What a gorgeous game!

"If there is to be an election, the responsibility is not ours," added MacDonald. "It will be caused by partisan abuse of Parliamentary votes, and the resentment against this chicanery which will be in the heart of every Labor supporter in the country will make our victories all the more numerous when the country is allowed to judge our work. Some fresh, clean fighting in the constituencies may clear the air and give us strength in the House of Commons which will make us independent of partisan interests."

The forthcoming election was not destined, however, to clear the air in the way that MacDonald anticipated, for a new factor was to play a famous (or infamous) part in deciding the issue of the appeal to the country. This was the publication shortly before the poll of the Zinovieff letter.

Before coming to what Ramsay MacDonald described as "the new Gunpowder Plot," reference must be made to the issues on which the Prime Minister went to the country. These were an appeal for a national vote of confidence on the Campbell case and on the proposal to conclude the treaties with Russia. In the opening speech of the campaign at Glasgow on October 13th, the Prime Minister, after declaring that their opponents were afraid of them, gave the facts about the Russian treaties in the following words: "You and we together, the representatives of ourselves and the Russian Government, must agree, first of all, as to how

much money is required, how it can be raised, how it is to be spent, what guarantee we are going to get, when it is going to be paid. When the representatives agree, and not till they agree—and the representatives will be the Board of Trade, the Treasury, probably the Foreign Office, and may be the Prime Minister himself—all that is to be put into the Treaty and the Treaty does not come into operation until the House of Commons itself has considered it and accepted its terms as being good, sound and wise terms. They don't make that clear to you and they would lose the election if they did."

Reviewing the record of his Government, Mr. MacDonald continued:

"Take Europe. What do they object to there? We found the name of Great Britain about as low as it could be. We have pulled it up. We found no agreement, and no likelihood of an agreement, either between France and ourselves or between the comity of nations. We have created it. Do they object to that? We found the League of Nations practically dying because no great beneficent lead had been given to it. We went to Geneva and gave that lead, and the League of Nations today is more vigorous than ever it was. Do they object to that? We had a balance of 30 millions on the Budget. We spent that by leaving it to fructify in the pockets of the consumers in the country. Do they object to that? We relieved you, especially the working classes, of the burden of overpriced tea and sugar. Do they object to that, and do you? We are working at new schemes for widows' pensions and similar relief. Do they object to that? We are going to produce schemes for imposing taxation of rating upon land values. Do they object to that?

"My friend Wheatley for the first time has tackled a problem, not of housing, that wide, general thing which means anything from the production of palaces to the creation of hovels, but how to produce houses that can be let to the working classes chiefly with intermittent incomes, and can be let and not sold of necessity. That has been done for the first time, and do they object to that? We are working at great schemes for the development of electrical power. We found nothing when we came in, or practically nothing. Do they object to that? The mines we were working at on the Sankey Report. They may object to that. I hope they do. Peace and disarmament—we have only begun our work

there. Do they object to our carrying it on? They may. My friends, this is the Government, this is the program, this is the ideal that has been interrupted last week, and I ask you to send us back to continue our work with a majority behind us, and not a majority in front of us."

This speech was broadcast by wireless to all parts of Britain, and millions who listened to it will recall the jerky sentences, the forcing of the voice, the way in which the strength rose and fell as the speaker moved restlessly about the platform. Mr. MacDonald was a tired man at the very start of the campaign, but the listeners did not know that. He appeared to them to be merely "nervy," dogmatic and a trifle wild—an impression particularly unfortunate in the case of an orator with a very high standard of statesmanship.

Glasgow was the opening shot of a triumphant tour which the Prime Minister made during the campaign. Beginning at Glasgow, he traveled to Edinburgh, Newcastle, across Yorkshire to Manchester, through the Black Country and so down to Aberavon, delivering four and five long speeches a day for a week, and double that number of short utterances as the crowds surged round his car at every village and hamlet on the road.

Those who were present at any stage of the tour must testify to the astonishing enthusiasm with which he was received all along the route. At a great meeting at Manchester, when he spoke for an hour and a half after an ovation unique even in his career, he said:

"The issue of this election to me is this; it is very simple, very straightforward. It is not whether the Labor Government has made mistakes. It has. I make a present of that to my opponents. What do I care? They can do what they like about it. We have made mistakes. That is not the issue. The issue is this: is the Labor Government going to have an opportunity of carrying on the work it has begun?"

On October 17th the famous Daimler car carrying MacDonald entered Wales, where he was received as a conquering hero. Unhappily he was a tired man, more tired than it is good for a political leader to be in the middle of a furious election cam-



paign. Considering the strain of the previous months his speeches maintained an astonishingly high level of statesmanship. There was, however, one phrase of a speech, delivered on the morrow of his triumphal entry into Aberavon, which was to be thrown in his face during the closing days of the campaign by a unanimous opposition Press.

He was referring to the misrepresentation from which the Labor Government was suffering and said:

"Parties that are on the verge of being beaten and disgraced always tell lies, as they are doing now. They talk about moving millions out of this country to Russia and all that rot. Why can't they make a decent intellectual fight of it, lay down their principles, put them against ours, and have an honorable set-to? Why do they slander us? Why, instead of having a great battle on a political principle, do they go about sniffing like mangy dogs on a garbage heap?"

Closely reasoned political argument led up to this phrase and followed it in the speech. And the speaker was the Prime Minister of Great Britain, who might, one would imagine, expect to be fairly quoted. How did the Press use it? They wrenched from the context this one passage—which Mr. MacDonald still declares to be fair comment in the circumstances in which it was uttered, and which was certainly no more reprehensible than countless phrases which fell from the lips of the Opposition leaders—and used it in a new campaign to destroy the prestige of MacDonald as Prime Minister. One London newspaper headed a column with the words: "The Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Foreign Secretary, the Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald, says: 'Why, instead of having a great battle on a political principle, do they go about sniffing like mangy dogs on a garbage heap?'"

It may be added that both as Prime Minister, and as Leader of the Opposition, MacDonald has frequently had great difficulty in securing a fair presentation in the Press for even utterances of grave national importance. One would imagine that as the leader of the second largest party in the House of Commons from 1922

to 1929 he was entitled, *ipso facto*, to full and adequate publicity for his declarations. So far was this from being the case that when accusations of an alliance between Labor and the book-makers were raised after the South Battersea by-election of 1929, with the accompanying innuendoes of a softening of Labor's moral scruples towards the question of betting, Mr. MacDonald referred to the subject on more than one occasion without being reported, and it was not until he attacked the Attorney-General on the subject, in a speech at Bolton, that his disclaimer of any tolerance towards the bookmaking interests was generally recorded in the Press.

Mr. MacDonald recently protested in print against this form of misrepresentation of Labor's case:

"I must categorically warn my readers against reports of speeches and comments upon them," he wrote.<sup>11</sup> "I am not complaining of what is strictly speaking misreporting, but rather of inadequate reporting which completely misrepresents its purpose, and the substance of a speech. One of a recent audience has just written to me that he wished to send some Tory friends the report of the speech I had made, but that, when he had looked at the newspapers, what was reported in every one he got hold of neither indicated the ground covered, nor the way it was covered. Mr. Garvin's paper this week bases a statement on my views about Protection upon a report of what I said at Birmingham which missed the whole point of my explanation. There is no accident in this; there is method. We approach a General Election. During the war I asked a reporter who pretty regularly attended my meetings why he troubled to do so as it was rarely that reports appeared. His reply was that he was not reporting my speeches but only the slips I made that could be used against me."

But to return to the speech in his constituency. Worse was to come than a phrase which placed a new weapon in the hands of the opposition. On October 25th, the Saturday before the poll, the newspapers "splashed" a sensation which took the form of a letter purporting to be signed by Zinovieff, President of the Third (Communist) International.

<sup>11</sup> *Forward*, December 1st, 1928.

This "Red letter," as it was immediately called, stated that the fate of the Russian Treaties depended on pressure being brought to bear upon the MacDonald Government, and further urged that as the "peaceful extermination of Capitalism" was impossible, propaganda should be increased within the British Army and Navy in order to pave the way for a successful insurrection and the violent overthrow of the capitalist system.

All this had been said many times before by the rulers of Russia, and there was therefore no reason why the public should have doubted the authenticity of the document.

The letter itself had no bearing upon the election, but because of the widespread view of the electors that it proved Russian influence in Labor's counsels, it played a decisive part in bringing Ramsay MacDonald's first term of office to an end.

The full story of how the original of the letter, or a copy of it, got into the hands of the Press before the Foreign Office had any official knowledge of its existence has never been satisfactorily cleared up to this day. Nor has the fact that the Foreign Office in the absence of MacDonald, who was at Aberavon conducting his election campaign, both published the letter generally and despatched an official protest to M. Rakovsky before the Foreign Secretary had been provided with any proofs of the authenticity of the document.

The Labor view of the incident is as follows: The document reached the Foreign Office after all the Ministers had left London to take part in the election. It was communicated to MacDonald, who returned it to the officials with a note that "the greatest care would have to be taken in discovering whether the letter was authentic or not." In the meantime, a draft letter of protest to Rakovsky was to be prepared.

The draft protest was sent to the Prime Minister a few days later. Because of the effect which these events were to have upon Labor chances at the election, I quote MacDonald's comment on the next step in his own words:

"I looked at the draft. I altered it, and sent it back in an altered form, expecting it to come back to me again with proofs of authenticity."

Instead of its coming back to him, the Foreign Office, for reasons which Labor declares are not yet fully explained, in his absence published it to the world. This clearly suggested that the letter had been accepted by the Labor Government as authentic. If that much was agreed, then the document was undoubtedly a gross violation of the condition contained in the new Treaty against Bolshevik propaganda in this country.

The effect of the disclosure that the Bolsheviks were trying to interfere in our internal affairs through a Party which was at that moment being bitterly attacked for proposing to guarantee, under conditions, the interest on a loan to Russia can be imagined.

Nor is this all the story. In addition to the charge of Russian influence, there was a companion charge that the letter had been lying in the Foreign Office for a month, and that the Labor Party did not intend it to be published until after the Election. According to this latter story, it was the fact that a London newspaper secured either the original or a copy of the "letter" that caused the Foreign Office to change its mind, and issue the document to the Press. Together, these two facts, if true, were a most damaging indictment of Ramsay MacDonald.

Was this second charge true?

"I challenge them to produce their evidence for that statement," declared the Prime Minister at Cardiff on the eve of the poll, "and while they are trying to concoct it I will give you a few dates. The Government was defeated on October 8th on the Campbell case. This letter, this Red Letter, did not find its way into the Foreign Office until the 10th, two days after the defeat on the Campbell case. It was not put into the Department until the 14th. It was sent to me in Manchester on the 15th. I received it on the 16th. On the morning of the 16th I minuted that the greatest care would have to be taken in discovering whether the letter was authentic or not. If it was authentic it had to be published at once, and in the meantime, while investigations were going on to discover the authenticity of the letter, the draft letter to Rakovsky would be prepared, so that when the authenticity was established no time would be lost in making our protest to the Soviet Government.



"That minute of mine was received in the Department on the 17th. On the 21st the draft—the trial draft—was sent to me at Aberavon for my observations. I was away in my son's constituency at Bassetlaw. I did not receive it until the 23rd. On the morning of the 24th I looked at the draft. I altered it and sent it back in an altered form, expecting it to come back to me again with proofs of authenticity, but that night it was published."<sup>12</sup>

That Mr. MacDonald's claim that there had been no delay in publication was correct, was conclusively proved—after the Election—by a statement made in the House by Sir (then Mr.) Austen Chamberlain, speaking as Foreign Secretary:

"If we have a complaint it is not of delay on the part of the right hon. gentleman. Given the circumstances of the time, which were those of an Election, there was, I think, no delay on the part of the right hon. gentleman in dealing with the document which came before him. Nobody could doubt that."

That statement was not made until December 15th. By that time the suggestion that the very people the Labor Government was trying to bring back into the family of nations were engaged in an attempt to stir up revolution within the Empire had contributed more than any other single factor to the success of the Conservative Party at the polls, and the installation of Mr. Baldwin on the Treasury Bench with one of the greatest majorities in our political history. Ramsay MacDonald believes that the Red Letter had little influence upon that result, and that the "Pact between" the opposition Parties accounted for the "landslide," but those in closest touch with the political situation at that time will not agree with him, and many of those whose opinions are entitled to respect within his own Party assess more heavily the damage done by the "Red Letter scare."

Only two comments are necessary upon this episode, as affecting a life-story of the chief actor. The first is that in the opinion

<sup>12</sup> A full outline of the facts will be found in the chapter headed "The Red Letter" in "Iconoclast's" book, *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (1923-25). Leonard Parsons.

of many unprejudiced observers, MacDonald was not sufficiently explicit on the subject of the Zinovieff letter when the subject was first raised. The reason for this was probably to be found in the double burden of Premiership and Foreign Ministry under which he had been struggling, and the fact that he was a tired man—worn out, for the moment, by the cares of office and an election tour which would have taxed the strength of the strongest man alive.

The second comment is that those who doubted Mr. MacDonald's willingness to take a strong line with Russia in the event of the document being proved genuine, did not realize how definitely the leader of the Labor Party had made up his mind about Communism.

Had MacDonald's opposition to Communism been confined to the last five years there would have been justification for saying that he had learnt his lesson in 1924. But he had unequivocally condemned the Russian theory of government by violence since 1919, and, indeed, even earlier.

The extracts from his speeches and writings already quoted supply a complete answer to the charge. That there had been no weakening in his attitude during his period in office was shown by the following further extract from his Presidential address at the Labor Party Conference, an address delivered before the election campaign had opened:

"I am not a Communist. Pettifogging conspiracy, secret associations, backstair wirepulling, mischievous stirring up of strife are neither in method nor in ideal the Socialism that has built up our Labor Party. They were detestable to our honored founders like Hardie and Morris. They respected opinions with which they did not agree, but they kept them at arm's length. When they had enemies they preferred to have them outside, rather than open the door to have them inside. Never was it more necessary for our Labor Movement to raise as its own flag the banner of democracy, of freedom, of progress by reason and of condemnation of tyranny by power. The war has threatened to make the world safe for dictatorships, for conspiracy, for mischief, for force coercing both the bodies and the minds of men. Unless we are

prepared to engage upon a crusade against that, we had better put up our shutters and declare that we are wearied in well-doing. Communism, as we know it, has nothing practical in common with us. It is a product of Czarism and war mentality, and as such we have nothing in common with it."

That the Labor Party supported its Parliamentary leader in this determination to have "no truck with Moscow ideas" was abundantly proved by three Resolutions proposed and passed at the same Conference. The first of these refused the Communist Party affiliation with Labor by 3,185,000 votes to 193,000; the second laid it down that no member of that Party could be officially endorsed as a Labor candidate by 2,456,000 to 654,000, and the third that no member of the Communist Party be accepted as a member of the Labor Party. This last resolution was passed by a small majority. The following year, in 1925, the door was "bolted and barred" against Communist infiltration by the acceptance, by 2,962,000 to 48,000, of a Resolution, officially endorsed by the Executive of the Party, reading:

"The National Executive also desires to intimate to the Conference that in its opinion affiliated trade unions can only act consistently with the decisions of the Annual Conference in its relation to the Communists by appealing to their members when electing delegates to national or local Labor Party conferences or meetings to refrain from nominating or electing known members of non-affiliated political parties, including the Communists."<sup>13</sup>

Before leaving the story of the first Labor Administration, mention should be made of the golden opinions which were earned by Ishbel MacDonald, the Prime Minister's eldest daughter, as

<sup>13</sup> At the Annual Conference at Birmingham in 1928 the loopholes in the former Resolutions were finally blocked by the passing of a comprehensive declaration which laid it down, among other things, that only those who accepted the Constitution of the Party should be engaged as speakers at Labor meetings. From that date the Communists finally gave up hope of "converting" the Labor Party and turned to open opposition at the polls, with what results were shown by the Communist Party polls at the General Election of 1929, and at the South-East Leeds by-election on August 1st, 1929, when in the first

the official "hostess" of No. 10 Downing Street. To succeed to the social responsibilities formerly carried out by Mrs. Baldwin, Mrs. Asquith and others, was not an easy task, even for a daughter of Margaret MacDonald. But Miss MacDonald performed her duties with brilliant success, and earned praise from all who came in contact with the MacDonald family during those months. And, typically enough, she did this without finding it necessary to depart from the simple—almost spartan—standard of living which has always been a feature of the MacDonald home.

The result of the Election may justly be described as a defeat for the Labor Government, but not for the Labor Party. Labor put forward 514 officially endorsed candidates, and the total Labor poll rose from 4,348,379 in 1923, to 5,236,733. Despite this increase of a million in the Labor voting strength, the Party suffered a loss of forty-two seats; 151 members were returned, compared with 191 members who had sat in the 1924 Parliament. The reason for this apparent paradox is to be found in the "gamble" due to the presence of three parties at the election fights since 1918, and in the fact that in 1924 there was a greater number of straight fights between the Socialist and Anti-Socialist forces than on former occasions. That this factor accounted equally with the increased Conservative poll for the reduced numbers of the Labor Party in the new House of Commons is revealed by an analysis of the losses which the Party suffered. Thus forty seats were lost in straight fights with Tories, six in straight fights with Liberals, and only eighteen in three-cornered contests.

Ramsay MacDonald retained his seat at Aberavon in a straight fight, but by a reduced majority of 2000 votes.

"straight fight" between Communism and Labor, the Communist poll was 512, and the Labor nominee won by a majority of 11,292.

That Mr. MacDonald's views have not changed since 1924 is evident from his speeches, and from a passage in a statement made in the House of Commons following the formation of his second Administration: "There is one very serious thing for this country, and I hope all parties see it. In the old days when revolutions broke out Crowns fell, but in recent years modern revolution brings down democracy." Hansard, July 2nd, 1929.



Twenty-four hours after the close of polling—indeed, when he heard the results declared the same night—Mr. MacDonald knew that he had been beaten in his bid for power as well as office. The bitterly contested fight was over. Rumor and mass-fears had done their work, and the growth of Labor, measured in seats in the House of Commons, but not by the votes polled in the country, was temporarily checked.

At that moment he turned for consolation to the well-stored recesses of his mind. Writing after the defeat, he said:

“Sometimes one must flee from familiar things and faces and voices, from the daily round and the common task, because one’s mind becomes like a bit of green grass too much trod upon. It has to be protected and nursed, and it has to be let alone. Then, give me the hill road, the bleating of the sheep, the clouds, the sun and the rain, the graves of dead races, the thatched roofs of living ones, a pipe and a fire when the day is closing, and a clean bed to lie upon until the sun calls in the morning. If friends fail, the hill road never does. When you are up it never flatters; it has no grievances if not put in a Cabinet, and its ruts are not made in revenge; when you are down it does not attribute its misfortunes to you. It is your loyal friend always, and by its own cheery equality sweetens and freshens all your sanities. There is nothing in faithfulness like to it, and blessed is the man who has found it. It puts him above the fickleness of fate and men.”

There is a prophetic quality about those words, for there were difficult days ahead, when there were many who “attributed their misfortunes” to the man who was at the helm.

With the resignation of the Labor Government the voice of criticism, stilled within the Party while its leaders held office, once again began to be heard. There were plenty who could have done better themselves and few who appreciated how great had been the difficulties.

At the Independent Labor Party Conference, held at Gloucester in April 1925, one speaker declared that they ought to learn a lesson from the nine months’ work done by the Labor Government.

"The Labor Government did very little for old age pensioners. It failed to utilize the national factories at Gretna, which might have been used as a great experiment in constructive work. The Trade Union Congress demanded that work should be developed through these factories, but the Labor Government declined. The dockyards at Glasgow and elsewhere were empty, but if the Labor Government had insisted on proper repairs being executed, work would, to a great extent, have been provided. The Labor Government, instead of safeguarding the lives of the sailors, decreased the number of inspectors to look over the boats before they went out. On the very day the Labor Ministers were attending the King's Levée with tunics and swords, 11,000 unemployed persons were refused benefit. What did the Labor Government do for the police strikers, who were better men than princes or kings yet born?

"When they were congratulating the Labor Government let them place on record their misdeeds. Let them remember their policy on the Sudan, and the use of troops in industrial strikes."

Replying to this and other speeches made at the same Conference, the ex-Premier drew a picture more in accordance with the known facts and circumstances under which the Labor Government had had to work:

"The conception they had of a Labor Government, as being composed of men and women who had a clear field in front of them, down which they could move if they liked, and if they did not move they were responsible for neglect, was absurd altogether," he declared. "Either in Opposition or Government they were surrounded by a seething, surging crowd, and what they had to do was to keep themselves together and keep their minds oriented on Socialism, sometimes stepping on one side, sometimes even affecting a slight retreat, in order that some progress could be made through the mass of complicated interests and prejudices. That was the problem a Government and Opposition had to face, and until his I.L.P. friends, hostile or friendly, got that into their minds, they would never be able to help them with their criticisms or do them justice with their praise. They could all criticize and say that this has been left undone and so on. But all he would like to say to them was something like the retort of the slave who was told that he had got a good master to go to, and

that he would have good employment and a fine time. The slave turned and said, 'You can take that yourself.' His observation to them and to many of his critics was, 'I wish yours was the job.' "

Turning to the question of whether Labor should repeat the experiment of taking office without power, should the opportunity again arise, MacDonald brought his clear-sighted vision to bear upon the problem:

"Do believe," he exclaimed, "that all my colleagues share with me this feeling that, in the silent moments of our lives, we are far more regretful than any one else can be in Annual Conferences that we were not able to do more when we were in office." He declined to lay down the principle that they would never again take office with a minority backing. He was not going to put a rope round his neck. All that might be fine, flashy talk, but it was not sound business. If ever the situation arose again when the question had to be put and answered by the Labor Party in the House of Commons, "Will you or will you not take office?" the answer "Yes or No" must be given in relation to the whole circumstances that existed at that time.

"When the history of the eight months of Labor Government came to be written," he added, "it would not be written by small-minded critics, who were anxious only to see its faults. It would be written by men who would be compelled to bear tribute to the effectiveness of that administration in the life of this country and Europe as a whole."

At the Labor Party Conference which met at Liverpool at the end of September 1925, there was further criticism of the experiment, and another attempt was made to pass a Resolution debarring the Party from again taking office without a majority.

This Resolution, moved by Ernest Bevin, of the Transport Workers and General Union, was in the following terms:

"This Conference is of opinion that in view of the experience of the recent Labor Government, it is inadvisable that the Labor Party should again accept office whilst having a minority of Members in the House of Commons."

Supporting this Resolution, a speaker declared that the Labor Government had been merely "powdering the fever." Not because they were unwilling to do more, but because their masters would not let them. "The Labor Party," the speaker continued, "had no opportunity of getting down to the root of the evil. Was that what they wanted—a Party in office, clinging to office, not for any bad reasons, but in the hope that the other people would be merciful and something might be done? They had not even the courage to do what so many of them had been telling the people they would do, remove the disqualifications for Old Age Pensions. But the other people came in and did it, and the Labor Party had to explain it away by saying they were not in power although they were in office."

Mr. MacDonald, replying in the debate, characterized some of the attacks which had been made upon one member of his Government as "contemptible and unjust." After outlining the difficulties with which they had been faced, he went on to say that they had had many governments that were good, many bad, and many indifferent; but when they and he were dead, and when their children were dead, and when a more remote succession of generations read of the old twentieth century, he did not think it was flattering the Labor Government or flattering the Party if he said they would then be loud in their praise when they read that, in the year 1924, the men from the pits, the men from the factories, and the men from the fields, coming into office with a minority and as a minority, and for the first time breaking the record in that respect, accomplished as Labor Ministers a work that would be enshrined in the records of the British people.

MacDonald appealed to the Conference to reject the Resolution, and the voting showed an overwhelming majority for his point of view.

In truth, such criticisms as were leveled at him from within the Party only served to reveal the strength of his position. Only once—immediately after the 1924 Election—was any suggestion made that there should be a change of leadership in the Party,



and on that occasion Arthur Henderson took the opportunity, at a dinner given in honor of the ex-Premier in London, to repudiate the rumor as baseless. "Such a stunt as that could not be scotched too soon. I hope no more will be heard of it," he stated.

A Continental observer, seeking an explanation of this strength in the hour of defeat, finds it in a factor still imperfectly understood by those who, endeavoring to discredit Labor by attacking its Prime Minister, only succeeded in consolidating the Party and bringing the waverers to his side:

"In the imagination and consciousness of hundreds of thousands, his position is beyond party politics. However little else he may resemble Lenin, this he has in common with the great Russian revolutionary—in the slums of the manufacturing town and in the hovels of the countryside, he has become a legendary being—the personification of all that thousands of downtrodden men and women hope and dream and desire. Like Lenin, too, he is the focus of the mute hopes of a whole class. Such reverence and such love is one of the weightiest factors in the world of political realities."<sup>14</sup>

While some criticized, there were others who praised the achievements of the first Labor Government, and especially of its Prime Minister, at their true worth.

"Whatever real success the Labor Party achieved was owing to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald more than to all the rest put together," declared the *Observer* on October 19th, 1924. The tribute continues:

"No competent person denies that he was a great Foreign Secretary. No one denies it in the Foreign Office, where he won the admiration of his staff. In that capacity he represented the whole nation with a dignity no man could surpass.

"He found an exasperated war mentality. He did more than any man in Europe to restore a genuine peace mentality.

"On the Sudan the firm unswerving attitude of this Labor Premier was a priceless service to the nation and the Empire."

<sup>14</sup> Egon Wertheimer, in *Portrait of the Labour Party*, p. 176.

I quote at random from this striking tribute from an unexpected quarter. It continues:

"These are shining public services rendered in a short time. When the hot dust of this electioneering battle is blown away, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's record and the serene, courageous statesmanship by which he achieved it, will be revealed again; and will be remembered as they deserve."

And, finally: "The first Labor Prime Minister in this country has stood out as a statesman of high honor and distinction."

No one who has troubled to examine the personal record of Ramsay MacDonald in office will dispute that the tribute, lavishly phrased as it was, is justified. Whatever the future holds for him, none will be able to say that when called to high office for the first time he proved unworthy of the long line of distinguished patriots and statesmen who had filled the same office in the past or of the men who will be chosen by the people to guide our land in the years yet unborn.

## CHAPTER XII

### INTERREGNUM

THE unwieldy Conservative majority facing a Labor Party of 151, increased by by-election successes to 162, tended to make the "Long Parliament," which lasted from the end of 1924 until June 1929, a dull affair.

This was not due to the absence of big issues; problems such as the protracted coalfields crisis, the continued unemployment, the extension of Safeguarding, the Trades Disputes Act, the Churchill Budgets and the questions of peace and disarmament, provided plenty of combustible material. But the issues were never in doubt—the Government Whips had only to maintain a loose party discipline for both Laborites and Liberals to be voted down upon any and all occasions.

There were but two dramatic interludes in the history of Stanley Baldwin's second Administration. One was the Prayer Book Debate—a non-party matter—the other the General Strike of 1926.

The problem of the mines was already casting its dark shadows over the country when the new Conservative Government settled down to its labors.

Speaking in his own constituency on March 20th, 1925, Ramsay MacDonald dealt with the issues which had to be faced, and pleaded for a negotiated "peace":

"Black clouds are hanging over the coalfields. I am all out for peace and the question I would put is this, 'Will the employers meet the miners in such a way that if there is to be peace the miners and their wives and families are not going to pay for the peace by starvation?' That is the whole point. We do not want to fight; you know quite well that if you fight now, you are very much handicapped. The trade is not good. But surely if there is anything in all the talk about both sides coming together and avoiding strife the sacrifice cannot be put

all upon your shoulders. If we are going to have peace, as I hope we are, my appeal to the owners is—Do meet the workmen in the trade in such a way that peace is not going to mean more hardships than they have to go through at the present time.

“There is talk about the miners, railwaymen and engineers coming to an arrangement. No greater calamity could come over the country than that there should be raised a great block of unions on the one side and Capital on the other engaged in a great suicidal fight in industry. What I want to see is a great combination of workmen demanding their rights and doing their duty to society while they are making that demand, and so appealing to the moral and intelligent sense of society that public opinion would stand by them and see them through their difficulties. The biggest union that can support the miners is the union of public opinion and reason. I want to see every right-thinking man and woman, whether railwaymen, engineer, or in any other trade, stand by the miners in their claim for a living wage and decent human conditions, I want to see all organs of public opinion, the Churches and Chapels, the House of Commons itself, stand by and see that the miner gets his due and is not sacrificed to profit-making capitalism.”

There is something in the mentality of both coal-owners and miners which makes peace by negotiation difficult. This is visible in the industrial record of the coal industry—a record of fruitless strikes and lock-outs which have too often resulted in a loss of temper, time and markets.

The position at the beginning of 1926—coal being produced at a loss, owners demanding reductions in wages while refusing to “rationalize” their industry; denying, indeed, that they had anything to learn, and miners clinging to the slogan “Not a minute on the day, not a penny off the pay”—had only one possible end. Even if the Government had exerted pressure upon the owners to put their houses in order, it might not have sufficed, for the miners, with their backs to the “starvation line,” were determined to resist any reduction in their admittedly low standard of living.

Organized Trade Unionism saw in the challenge to the miners the first move in a general attack upon wages, and the generous



feeling of sympathy towards the miners was an additional incentive to stand by their side in fighting the terms that were the only alternative to a lock-out.

The Trade Union Congress therefore took up the challenge thrown down to a single and embarrassed Union, while striving by negotiation to secure from the Government such terms and assurances as would safeguard the miners from the disastrous proposals which the owners were trying to enforce. The action must stand to their credit, but its results were not entirely satisfactory. The prospect of assistance from the other Unions confirmed the obstinate attitude of the miners' leaders, notably Arthur Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation. There were others, too, who were not averse from putting to the test at last the weapon of a General Strike—the "bogy" of industry since 1912.

This was the atmosphere in which the Labor Party and the Trade Union Congress strove together to secure a peaceful settlement. But the refusal of the Prime Minister to coerce the owners into a better frame of mind and the unyielding attitude of the miners, who refused to agree to any reduction in wages—the prior condition to negotiations demanded by the Government—defeated every attempt to reach a settlement, and on May 3rd the General Strike began.

In a Manifesto issued on that day, the General Council of the Trade Union Congress declared:

"A situation of the utmost gravity has been produced by the action of the mine-owners in locking out more than a million mine-workers, and by the failure of the Government to make any acceptable proposals to enable the industry to continue without any further degradation of the standards of life and labor in the coalfields pending reorganization.

"The General Council, with the full approval and cooperation of the Congress can recommend the miners to accept, is reached by midnight on Monday, the workers in these essential industries and services will be withdrawn.

"At the special conference of Trade Union Executives on Thursday,

Friday and Saturday last measures were taken by the General Council to bring about a stoppage of work in the transport services, the printing trades and certain productive industries.

"Unless a settlement, which the representatives of the Trade Union accredited representatives of the Trade Unions, has been compelled to organize united resistance to the attempt to enforce a settlement of the mining problem at the expense of the mine-workers' wages.

"The Trade Unions disclaim all responsibility for the calamity that now threatens. Their action is not directed against the public. Responsibility for the consequences that must inevitably follow a general cessation of work lies with the mine-owners and the Government entirely."

As the leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, Ramsay MacDonald had, technically, no responsibility for this attempt to put "direct action" into practise. The General Strike was conducted by the General Council of the Trade Union Congress on behalf of the organized working classes of Britain, and it was not until the stoppage had begun, and after practically every Union in the land had delegated its powers to the Executive of the T.U.C., that MacDonald and Henderson were invited to join that Executive as delegates from the Labor Party. ✓

The crucial meeting referred to in the *Manifesto* was held at the Memorial Hall, London, on Saturday, May 1st. That meeting, when the Trade Unions placed their future in the hands of the Trade Union Congress, will long be remembered by those present as the most impressive example of solidarity which British workers have ever given to the world. Rightly or wrongly, every delegate present believed that the coal-owners were relying upon the miners' poverty to win the battle for them, and pledged those whom they represented to leave their employment, if called upon, and face hardship, misrepresentation and suffering rather than desert their brethren in the coalfields.

Ramsay MacDonald had a seat on the platform as an "observer," and there was an atmosphere of crisis as the Chairman, Arthur Pugh, began to call the roll of all the Unions affiliated to

the T.U.C., asking the secretaries for answers to the question put to their Executives at the previous Conference—"whether they will place their powers in the hands of the General Council and carry out the instructions of the General Council from time to time, both regarding the conduct of the dispute and financial assistance."

The list from which the Chairman was reading covered the whole field of industry—railwaymen, transport workers, engineers, laundrymen, asylum workers, journalists, clerks. And as the names of the Unions were called out, delegate after delegate stood up and answered a fateful "Yes."

"It was not dramatic," one who was present has written—"although history was being made, on the surface were no thrills, but when one thought of what it all meant, it was impossible not to be stirred, not to feel that the Awakening of Labor had at last come.

"It was a band of brothers—and sisters—that engaged in making the preparations for the defense that Labor is compelled to put up against the Government's attack."<sup>1</sup>

That day Trade Unions representing 3,653,527 workers agreed to carry out the orders of the T.U.C. and only a small minority, representing but 49,500 members, gave, for special reasons, an inconclusive, though not necessary negative, reply. Thus, on May Day 1926, the entire Trade Union Movement of Great Britain was united in support of the threatened miners.

Addressing that meeting on behalf of the Labor Party, MacDonald declared:

"He would be a poor creature indeed, both in mind and soul, who was not deeply moved by emotion at this moment. I should prefer to finish, and I think my colleague, Mr. Henderson would also, as we started, by sitting on the back seats, but the Government has decided otherwise.

"The Government has decided to fight the standard of living of our people, and that battle cannot be kept off the floor of the House of Commons."

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 3rd, 1926.

Continuing, Mr. MacDonald said they had been represented in some of the morning newspapers as wanting war.

"In the name of everything that I hold sacred I would tell the British public that I have never been associated with a body of men who have striven more strenuously and sincerely to make peace than the colleagues with whom I have been working during the last days.

"At 10 o'clock on Friday night I believed that we had got peace, and to-day I ask the great mass of the British people, who, I believe, want justice done in the matter, not to regard the twist which has been given to the negotiations in the newspapers.

"If they do that, I challenge them to come to any conclusion other than that the decision of the Government to break off negotiations was a crime against society.

"I am convinced," added MacDonald, "that if we had had another half a dozen hours the Government could not in decency have drawn the sword at all. They would not give us the time. They have wasted it since February, 1925, when we began telling them that in the breast of the coal industry there was disease, trouble, and disillusion, and asking them what they were going to do.

"Those warnings were repeated again and again. In 1925 they confessed that they were not prepared, and doled out other people's money." After referring to the breakdown in the negotiations Mr. MacDonald concluded: "We have come to a time when the miner's wife has got to meet her husband with tears in her eyes because she cannot fulfil her duties of looking after the home. I cannot help feeling that there are millions of men and women who will see to it that the fight, which is a wicked fight and an unnecessary one, shall not end against the miners.

"On Monday we will raise the question in the House of Commons, and I hope, trust and believe that something will happen before then which will enable us to go about our work joyously and hopefully during the next week. If not, we are there in the battle with you, taking our share uncomplainingly until right and justice have been done."

On Monday, May 3rd, the T.U.C. was still striving to find a peace formula which both sides and the Government would accept as a basis for renewed negotiations. But the sands in the hourglass were running low, and recalcitrant spirits on both sides were damning the chances of the peacemakers.

That evening the negotiations were continued on the floor of



the House of Commons, when the Prime Minister, dealing with the threatened General Strike then only a few hours ahead, quoted from an article by Ramsay MacDonald in the *New Leader*, which stated: "All my life I have been opposed to the sympathetic strike. It has no practical value; it has one certain result—a bitter and blinding reaction. Liberty is far more easily destroyed by those who abuse it than by those who oppose it." "I agree with every word of that," commented Stanley Baldwin.

The leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party rose to reply. On his shoulders rested a responsibility second only to that carried by the Prime Minister. While he held no office in the Trade Unions, he spoke for them in Parliament—spoke for the millions of working men and women who were preparing to sacrifice wages, security, savings—even personal comfort, as far as they possessed any—for an unselfish loyalty.

After dealing step by step with the negotiations in connection with the Coal Lock-out, and the circumstances in which the decision to call a General Stoppage had been made, Mr. MacDonald went on:

"We have all done our best and we will continue to do so. The Prime Minister said that he sat down with an aching heart. I got up with an aching heart. A remark was made about something I said regarding a General Strike. If I have a grievance against the Prime Minister for having read out a statement of mine, it is that he selected a very poor condemnation. I have gone far more into detail than that. This makes no difference to me at all. I have made all the contribution I can. With the discussion of general strikes and Bolshevism and all that kind of thing, I have nothing to do at all. I respect the Constitution as much as the Right Hon. Gentleman, the Member for Hillhead (Sir Robert Horne, who had spoken previously). I am not at all sure, although one does not like to say this, what is to happen even in the highest society unless reason is to be the basis of our social life. I said this, 'No man and no party can ever stand between society and revolution unless reason is moving on both sides. Behind the dam which requires to be raised and raised and raised, a

heavy overwhelming, overpowering, great flood of water is rising. At last the dam is broken.' I have said that, and that is the difficulty in which we are finding ourselves. Every hour or two—day or two—can we afford the time? The miner says, 'I must defend my standard of life.' Whether he defends it by complicated methods of calculating his wages or not, is no matter; there is no complicated calculation required for the money he gets at the end of the week."

Two days later MacDonald made another appeal for a just settlement before further loss and suffering was occasioned and before the miners were forced by the threat of starvation to surrender to terms which were akin to slavery.

"I again ask this House, cannot you do something?" he said. "I am standing as solidly by the miners as any of my colleagues. The evil sands are beginning to run down. Is this House not going to supplement goodwill and common sense and see whether we cannot settle it? I want to warn you. I am not speaking for the Trade Union Congress. I am speaking for nobody. I have not consulted with my colleagues or my friends around me, but I am speaking from my own heart because I know—I believe I know and can visualize—what all this will mean as the days go into weeks and the weeks, although I hope not, go into months. So far as memory is concerned they will. Although the men have said and the Government have said that there is to be no more appealing as far as they are concerned, I am an outsider. I stand apart. I am not a member of the Trade Union Congress, and therefore I am a little freer than some of my colleagues, and I can do things for which I may be blamed to-morrow by the Trade Union Congress. But I cannot let this opportunity go by without telling the House what is in my heart, and, if it is rejected, well, I have done my best and no man can do more."

This and other appeals for a settlement of justice were doomed to failure by the uncompromising temper displayed by both sides. Whatever the views of the Prime Minister, there were prominent members of his Cabinet who welcomed this fight and would thrust it "to a finish." Bellicose sentiments were clouded in lofty arguments about "threats to the State," disguising a real desire to "teach Labor a lesson." It must be recorded that the attitude of

the miners' leaders enabled them to do this with some show of reason. From the first moment of the stoppage to the last—and beyond the general return to work—the Executive of the Miners' Federation refused every attempt, from their own side, from the Government, or from well-meaning independents, to find the basis of a settlement which would leave the Federation intact, and save the miners from the worst effects of the employers' demands. Their reply to each and every attempt to find a formula, embodying necessarily an agreement to some reduction in wages, was "We won't look at it." Never was obstinacy maintained at such a price.

They rejected what was known as the Samuel Report—the findings of the Royal Commission on the Industry presided over by Sir Herbert Samuel—thereby gravely postponing many excellent improvements and developments. They refused to unbend when the T.U.C. strove for a settlement on the Sunday before the General Strike began. They were equally and more disastrously stubborn when the T.U.C. had obtained from Sir Herbert Samuel a formula which those who spoke for united Labor regarded as "representing a satisfactory basis for drawing up proposals for the purpose of reopening negotiations in the mining industry."

Meanwhile, millions of men were idle, Union funds were melting away, and the life of the community was suffering disastrous interruption.

The historian examining the records of those days will, I believe, place upon record two irrefutable facts which stand out clear and distinct from much that is shadowy and debatable—the wonderful spirit of unity and loyalty in the Labor Movement and the costly obstinacy of the miners' chosen leaders. Misdirection of the miners' affairs caused the stoppage of the pits to drag on for eight weary months and to end in a peace that was no peace, but exhaustion.

In these circumstances there could be but one end, unless the Trade Union Congress had been prepared to risk the total wreckage of the Movement.

Ten days after the Strike began the General Council reported that "the fact was borne upon the Council from the attitude of the miners' executive that no matter what provisions might be made to obtain a basis for reopening negotiations and enabling a settlement to be reached, they were not prepared to agree to consider, as a part of such negotiations, anything which indicated possible wage adjustments for any section or grade of miners in any district."

The conclusion reached was that "The Council felt the position was too grave to justify their being tied to a mere slogan. . . . The Miners' Executive definitely rejected the Royal Commission's report as a basis of settlement. . . . The General Council could not . . . follow the miners' executive in a policy of mere negation."

Following this decision the General Strike was called off and the miners were left to negotiate a settlement on their own, with the assistance and advice, however, if they still wished it, of the T.U.C.

These facts can usefully be placed upon record, because they prove that the so-called "collapse" of the General Strike was not brought about by the success of counter-measures taken by the Government or by fear of the consequences, but solely because the Trade Union Congress felt that the intransigent attitude of the miners was nullifying all their sacrifices and efforts. It was the miners and not the Government who brought the stoppage to an end.

Upon the resumption of work MacDonald used his influence to prevent bitterness, and to oppose those reactionary employers who sought to use the moment of confusion for their own ends. While demanding that the peace should be "a real peace of friendship," and that men and women should not be victimized for their loyalty, he declared the General Strike to be a weapon which should not be used again—a form of attack unnecessary in a democratic country.

Speaking the day after the announcement that the General Strike had been called off, Mr. MacDonald quoted the following



words from an appeal which had been issued to the nation by the King.<sup>2</sup>

"Let us forget whatever elements of bitterness the events of the past few days may have created, only remembering how steady and how orderly the country has remained, though severely tested, and forthwith address ourselves to the task of bringing into being a peace which will be lasting because, forgetting the past, it looks only to the future with the hopefulness of a united people."

Mr. MacDonald then said that there was "a great contrast between the tone of the Prime Minister's statement of the previous day, announcing the end of the strike, and that of the *British Gazette* to-day. I think it is a great pity that that should be so, a profound pity. It is not helpful, it is only provocative, and I am rising to ask whether a change cannot take place. Let there be no mistake about this: The strike, whether one agrees with it or not, which was terminated yesterday, was purely an industrial struggle. It was started, rightly or wrongly, with one idea, and one idea only, to support the miners in resisting a threatened reduction of wages. Those responsible for calling that strike, those responsible for conducting it, said before it began, and said whilst it was on, that the moment certain industrial securities came over the horizon, that that moment they would be satisfied and declare peace. That happened. According to program, according to intention, from which they never deviated by a hairbreadth, the result of yesterday took place. Nobody knows better than the Right Honorable Gentleman, after all that has happened, how much courage it requires to do what was done yesterday. Nobody knows better than those who have been engaged in industrial disputes what risks were run by those who took the step that was taken yesterday. I think it was the right step, and I think it was a step that ought to draw from everybody, from every class, and from every section of the community, a determination to help to make this step effective in the establishment of peace.

"What has been the result? We have had industrial disputes before; we have had people threatening to crush out trade unionism; trade unionism has had bad smashes; contracts have been broken, bad temper has been raised, and at the moment of peace the most optimistic of us have felt that such great disasters had overcome, not the industry

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons, May 13th, 1926.



BRITISH LABOR'S FIRST PRIME MINISTER "RAMMIE" IN THE OLD WORLD GARDEN AT CHEQUERS, WITH HIS DAUGHTER JOAN, IN 1924



of the country, but the mind of the people, and that peace was only to be a whited sepulcher. A mere simulacrum. But common sense came over them, the common sense of both parties, so that when peace came, and the fight was over, the first thing that the combatants on both sides did was to shake hands. That has not happened now. That has not happened in the newspapers, it has not happened in the streets, it has not happened in some wild and heady demonstrations, it has not happened regarding the conditions imposed upon the men who have presented themselves for work.

"If there is any attempt to smash up trade unionism," went on Mr. MacDonald, "if any section of the country or any foolish person in the country thinks that after the events of last week or yesterday, he can scrape the faces of trade unionists in the dust, he is very much mistaken. We want a settlement. We want no guerilla warfare to begin and to go on and on and on. We want no resentment left behind. But if that is going to be avoided, it has got to be avoided by treating men as independent self-respecting working men, who are not going to crawl back, and have not got to be treated as human beings with the yoke of absolute subordination riveted on to their necks. If it is crush, let us know. My desire would be that especially this House, with all its political enmities and its political divisions, and with its very deep and fundamental diversities upon the meaning of what has happened during the last eight or nine days—that this House should now, first of all, make a declaration to the whole of the nation that it wants no crushing, that it wants no humiliation, and that it lifts up its voice and makes its appeal on behalf of healing, restoration and restitution."

Asked by an interviewer whether he thought that the General Strike had succeeded, MacDonald replied: "Well, it all depends upon what you mean; and I will answer it by putting another question. Was the position which the Government occupied at the end of the strike in regard to the miners the same as it occupied before the strike was declared? Of course it was not.

"Had Mr. Baldwin produced during the week before the strike the document which he gave to the miners the week after the strike; had he, before the strike, seen that owners and men left alone could never settle their differences, and had he also seen



that during negotiations between owners and men the Government were represented to guide the parties away from war, there would have been no strike at all. He did none of these things until after the strike, when he at any rate declared his intention to do them all. Those who talk about the strike having ended in unconditional surrender, talk rubbish.”<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the future, the leader of the Labor Party stated in the same interview: “We shall continue our work in the House of Commons, to press upon the Government the legislation which we think necessary in order to secure both directly and indirectly an adequate wage for the miner. The Government is already breaking its pledges, however, because apparently the promised legislation to nationalize minerals and to authorize the municipal handling of coal is to be dropped. We shall fight these matters in the House of Commons. Furthermore, we shall hold the Government to its pledges regarding the reorganization of the coal industry. I have no belief that the owners will voluntarily reorganize the industry, and until the industry is reorganized there can be no peace in it. It will be our business to compel the Government to take power by legislation to do the right thing.

“The moment the General Strike ended,” concluded MacDonald, “the Parliamentary Labor Party came into action, and our members in the country may rest confident that the Party will do its duty. If it cannot, in addition, force the Government to do *its* duty, it will in any event enlighten the country as to who is the criminal. We have no power except what the people give us, and an enlightened people will give us all we want or need.”

Reviewing the history of the crisis in a speech at North Hammersmith, Mr. MacDonald placed the responsibility for what had occurred upon the Government.

“They tell you that it was a revolution,” he said, “they tell you it was a deliberate attack and challenge to the ordinary working of the Constitution. They tell you that you all came out not to support the miners, but in obedience to some sinister and devilish call from a foreign country to upset your own. And, unfortunately, a good many

<sup>8</sup> Labor Press Service, May 20th, 1926.

people believe in that nonsense. You know and I know that that extraordinary manifestation of human solidarity was an extraordinary manifestation that men and women nowadays cannot stand idly by while millions of their own flesh and blood are going to be ground down in their standard of life, and it was that sentiment and that sentiment alone, which brought 3,000,000 men out.

"Whatever we may think of the General Strike, either as an industrial or political weapon, in any event we should not tell lies about it. My position is perfectly well known. In these last days, what happened was this. By the way the Government handled the negotiations, by the way they neglected their opportunities, by the way they declined to follow the path of reason, by the way they turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to every approach to common sense and good sense, by the end of that week they had 'boxed' the whole of the trade union movement until there was one thing and one thing only they could do as a united movement, and that was to declare a sympathetic strike on a large scale.

"Never for a single moment, never for a solitary hour, did the men responsible for that strike toy or play with political issues. I was present at many of the meetings—not to take part in, because I never did—I was present at the meetings in order that I might know what was in the minds of these men, in order that I might be able, when the time came for the House of Commons to deal with the issues, to deal with them on first-hand knowledge. Never for a single moment, never for an hour, did I hear any man—I don't care whether he is regarded as being of the right wing or the left wing of the party—I never heard a single member of the Trade Union Congress General Committee whisper an idea, give a piece of advice, suggest a move or policy that was aimed at a political issue.

"Moreover, these men from the beginning never lost their heads as the Government did. These men from the very first day, from the very first minute, after the Memorial Hall conference dispersed, had one aim in front of them, and one aim only, and that was to get an industrial situation created that would strengthen the hands of the miners to resist the encroachment the owners were making upon the standard of life of the mining population."

For the General Strike as a weapon, MacDonald had little use, and he took the opportunity afforded by the events of 1926 to

place upon record, not for the first time, his reasons for doubting its efficiency, however united might be the men who sought to find with its aid a solution of their industrial problems.

"We stand," he declared, after the strike ended, "where we have always stood. The political Labor Party never regarded the strike as a political instrument. It was industrial in its conception, in its conduct, and in its close. I believe that the result will be a very strong swing on to the side of political action, and a far closer cooperation between the industrial organizations and the political one."

At the end of that "black fortnight" he expressed once again his faith in the ballot-box in a striking statement upon the strike broadcast in the pages of a weekly journal:

"Let the Trade Unions face the facts. Men will come out heroically, but when they are out, what is to happen? They can demonstrate, but there can be no 'victory' for a General Strike. They can starve, but there will be no satisfactory end. Engineers on strike will not help to make colliery owners more reasonable, but will very likely make their own employers less reasonable. A railway dispute added to a mines dispute will not help to reorganize the mines, but is more likely to disorganize them. That is not the way to make this old rumbling world move along.

"Force only rouses force, and when a General Strike comes its blow is not against the employers but against ordinary folk in the mass. When industrial force hits something more than profits, it hits people's heads—or stomachs." <sup>4</sup>

In another statement Ramsay MacDonald condemned the General Strike as an industrial weapon in even stronger terms:

"The General Strike is a weapon that cannot be wielded for industrial purposes. It is clumsy and ineffectual. It has no goal which, when reached, can be regarded as victory.

"If fought to a finish as a strike, it would ruin Trade Unionism, and the Government in the meantime could create a revolution; if fought

<sup>4</sup> *Answers*, May 29th, 1926.

to a finish only as a means to an end, the men responsible for decisions will be charged with betrayal.

"So to-day, some critics, who have responsibility for nothing, blame the General Council; some blame the miners. The real blame is with the General Strike itself and those who preached it without considering it and induced the workers to blunder into it.

"It was not (because in its nature it could not be) of help to the miners. The best bargain it could get for them they have rejected, whether wisely or not remains to be seen.

"I hope that the result will be a thorough reconsideration of trade union tactics. If the wonderful unity in the strike which impressed the whole world with the solidarity of British Labor would be shown in politics, Labor could solve mining and similar difficulties through the ballot-box." <sup>5</sup>

Only a few days after work was resumed, proof of the general support of MacDonald's theory was supplied by Labor's by-election victory at North Hammersmith. But the coal stoppage still dragged its slow length along, while economic forces—poverty and distress—did their work and finally drove the miners back upon the mine-owners' terms.

While this terrible attrition was in progress, Labor in the House of Commons fought day after day in attempts to get the Government to apply pressure upon the owners. The Cabinet passed the Eight Hours' Act instead, and MacDonald's efforts to get the Government to secure concessions from the owners were made in vain. The Conservative benches, packed with the inflated majority which the Zinovieff letter had produced, left them hopelessly outnumbered. And the temper prevailing in the Conservative Government, according to the Labor view, made any appeal to reason a mere waste of breath.

In September, for one brief period of time, it seemed as though Winston Churchill, in the absence of the Prime Minister, intended to make a stand against the owners and to insist upon joint negotiations upon a national basis, but the Government, in Ramsay MacDonald's phrase, "ran away from Mr. Churchill—the Prime

<sup>5</sup> *Socialist Review*, June 1926.



Minister led it back into the owners' pockets," and the threat to the owners passed safely over their heads.

"Knowingly and deliberately the Government gave the owners the Eight Hours' Act as power to be used against the miners and in their own interests. Having given the owners all they want they cannot even get them to meet them in the presence of the Federation. Has any Government ever found itself in such a humiliating position? I noticed a case in the papers the other day of a scoundrel who got from his sweetheart all that she possessed, and then told her to go to the devil. He got what he richly deserved—jail. Without the least sense of gratitude for favors received from the Government, with nothing in its mind except a bitter determination to smash the miners and impose the terms upon which work is to be resumed (do not let us insult the men by using the word 'Peace'), the owners tell the Government to go to the devil, and the Cabinet sighs, sends for the miners, wrings its hands, but confesses to them that the Government must yield to whatever is the will of the owners."<sup>6</sup>

The way in which the coal stoppage ended is now history. The full story of the dispute, and of the tangled negotiations which continued intermittently for months, would need several chapters, and has no place in this record of Ramsay MacDonald's career, except in so far as the deep sense of resentment, still alive in 1929 and in no way confined to the coalfield constituencies, contributed to Labor's sweeping successes at the polls on May 30th.

While the Coal Lock-out obscured other issues from the public, within the Labor Movement differences between Ramsay MacDonald and the Independent Labor Party, which had first revealed themselves at the Annual Conference of the Independent Labor Party in 1925, came to a head.

MacDonald was studiously polite to the I.L.P. upon all occasions. He applauded its activities as a propagandist body. But equally he deprecated, sometimes publicly, its tendency to dictate a policy to the Labor Party. Greatest offense of all, he characterized the I.L.P. proposals for "Socialism in our Time" as "flashy futilities."

<sup>6</sup> *Forward*, September 25th, 1926.

Probably Mr. MacDonald still has a sentimental feeling towards the organization which Keir Hardie created, for when he first felt constrained to protest against some of its activities, he seemed to speak more in sorrow than in anger.

"The work of the I.L.P. is to propagate Socialism and to use every means and watch every opportunity to do that. And it should be done in the I.L.P. way. Flirting with this movement and that only obscures our own position and makes it hard for the honest inquirer to understand it. Backing everybody who cares to force our hand—becoming champions of Communists so that we are quite naturally mixed up with them—and such-like, is not the service we should render to Socialism.

"There is abundant work for the I.L.P. and the work is essential. It is to keep Socialism alive as an invigorating and guiding idea. That requires constant hard intellectual work of a concentrated kind. Only if the I.L.P. declines to do that can it be regarded as useless."

Despite moderation on both sides, the split upon matters of policy widened, and at the Annual Conference of the Labor Party held at Margate in October 1926, MacDonald as the spokesman of the National Executive of the Labor Party poured cold water upon some of the proposals advocated by the I.L.P. with much insistence and the usual air of omnipotence which is habitual to that body.

From 1912, when he ceased to be Secretary to the Labor Party upon taking over the Parliamentary leadership, until this conference, Ramsay MacDonald had been nominated for the Treasurership of the Labor Party by the I.L.P. and had attended the annual Conferences as a member of the I.L.P. delegations.

Before the 1927 Annual Conference, however, the I.L.P. retorted to his lack of sympathy by withdrawing this nomination after a long and somewhat bitter debate in which his many friends within the I.L.P. made a hard fight on his behalf. This decision might have brought about an anomalous situation, for by the rules of the Party, while all Labor M.P.'s and candidates are *ex-officio*

members of the Conference, with the right to speak, only delegates nominated by the constituent bodies forming the Labor Party are entitled to vote or to be appointed to any office on the Party Executive. The withdrawal of the I.L.P. nomination, therefore, might have meant that the man who led Labor in the House of Commons would be temporarily deprived of the right to be appointed to any office in the Party.

The difficulty was overcome by the Moray and Nairn Divisional Labor Party stepping into the breach and nominating MacDonald as their delegate. But the anomalous and embarrassing possibilities remained, with the result that to ensure the non-recurrence of such a situation, it is now proposed that the Parliamentary Chairman for the time being shall be *ex officio* a member of the National Executive by virtue of his position and without any nomination from any outside body.

The I.L.P. apologia for excommunicating MacDonald, an action much criticized by Labor members of Parliament at the time, was given to the world in the *New Leader*.

"Mr. MacDonald is opposed to the policies which the I.L.P. is seeking to get the Labor Party to adopt, and is the principal spokesman of the Labor Party against them. This places both Mr. MacDonald and the I.L.P. in an anomalous position. Confusion is naturally created, and, with the fullest personal goodwill towards Mr. MacDonald, the National Council of the I.L.P. feels that it would be better that the delegation representing the Party should reflect I.L.P. policy. The recommendation of the National Council does not, of course, mean that Mr. MacDonald would not be nominated as Labor Party Treasurer. Last year 29 organizations, in addition to the I.L.P., nominated him. The chairman and secretaries of the I.L.P. have seen Mr. MacDonald, and have explained to him that the recommendation of the National Council is made on these broad grounds without any diminution of personal regard."

The celebrated Maxton-Cook manifesto which appeared in 1928, and was aimed at forcing a more extreme policy upon the Labor Party (a characteristic sentence in this "Left Wing" pro-

nouncement read, "We can no longer stand by and see thirty years of devoted work betrayed in making peace with capitalism and compromises with the political philosophy of our capitalist opponents"),<sup>7</sup> shows that the differences remain, while the I.L.P. comment upon the moderate program upon which the Labor Party, under MacDonald's guidance, fought the General Election of 1929, was that "for the present we must accept the fact that the program expresses the attitude of the Labor Party; and, though we would like bolder policies, we must work with undimmed enthusiasm for the cause, realizing that Socialism can only come through the Labor Movement, and that it is the work of the I.L.P. to-day, as it always has been, to convert that movement to bolder Socialist views."

Ramsay MacDonald's answer to this criticism, foreseen and delivered before the latter was published, is contained in an article which appeared in the *Forward* in September 1927.

"One of the greatest problems of the Socialist, if indeed, not the greatest in view of its consequences upon the rapidity with which we are to get Socialism, is how to mingle judgment with enthusiasm, and patience with haste. I deplore the cry 'Socialism in our Time' for several reasons, but especially for this: that it will postpone our success until the Greek Kalends. It is gradualism drawn out to the *n*th stretch of time, under the guise and with all the airs of a fleet-footed nymph. Men are not sheep, but they have two of the dominating characteristics of sheep. They are gregarious and they are easily frightened. It is foolish to give that fact as an excuse for losing an election

<sup>7</sup> The aim of James Maxton, leader of the "Clydeside" group within the Labor Party, and Arthur Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation, of Great Britain—the joint-authors of this document—was to hold a series of conferences and meetings with the rank and file of the Labor Party in the country, and either force a more radical policy upon MacDonald and his colleagues, or to lead a breakaway movement. The campaign, which was completely out of touch with political realities and based upon sentiment, failed to arouse any enthusiasm and the provincial conferences never took place, the only result being to demonstrate afresh the confidence of the Labor Party as a whole in its chosen leaders, and especially in the tried statesmanship of Mr. MacDonald. The well-founded belief that the document was not altogether free from Communist inspiration may also have had something to do with the fiasco.



and then proceed to build up a policy on the assumption that it will never happen again.”<sup>8</sup>

More recently, MacDonald has laid down the principles which, in his opinion, should inspire both the Labor Party, and the Independent Labor Party, and administered polite correction to the enthusiastic spirits of the latter body, in these words:

“With the Labor Party in existence and the I.L.P. affiliated to it, the I.L.P. cannot go on as an independent Party of Labor laying down political policies of its own, trying to impose political policies of its own, trying to impose a superior allegiance for itself, and defying the decisions and the policy of their colleagues in Parliament. Differences of view there may be—and, I hope, always will be—but the place to discuss them is the weekly Party meetings, and when the Party allows these differences to be expressed, that should be done in the spirit of a team and of colleagues. Never was the union and the spirit better than it is to-day, and constituencies ought to show that they hold in no appreciation the conduct of those who would break them.”<sup>9</sup>

While these exchanges were proceeding with the Independent Labor Party, the Communists were conducting a “drive” against MacDonald on their own. Urged on by their Moscow associates, the mysterious handful of nonentities who call themselves the British Communist Party sought to embarrass the leader of the Labor Party by issuing a broadsheet called the *MacDonald Special*.

In this four-page paper, under a photograph of Mr. MacDonald in Ministerial uniform, appeared an article entitled: “MacDonald the Actor; A Man with No Principles; Domineering and Intolerant; A Petty Intriguer; An Egoist, Weak and Unstable.”

<sup>8</sup> Writing in *Forward*, January 7th, 1928, following Philip Snowden’s resignation from the I.L.P., Mr. MacDonald said: “Within the past year or so I have had scores of letters and interviewers asking me if the I.L.P. in its new lines ought to be supported, and on the whole I have advised that it should, in the hope that it would drop much of its present attempts to be important and go in for the propaganda of Socialism, which is more needed than ever. Snowden has given up hope that it will do so, and some of the comments on his decision seem to justify him.”

<sup>9</sup> *Forward*, December 15th, 1928.

Other terms of scurrilous abuse hurled at the head of the man whom some people still term a "Bolshevist" were "Foreign Office Tout," "A Typical Social Traitor," and "A Middle-class Reformer." An editorial announcement "explained" the reason for this publication by saying that "MacDonald and his policy—MacDonaldism—is a deadly cancer eating at the vital roots of the Labor Movement. MacDonald, with his open and avowed allegiance to the policy of the Tory Government, his malignant attacks on valiant working-class leaders like A. J. Cook, and his contemptuous attitude towards the workers stamps himself as great an enemy as Mr. Baldwin."

This tirade would not be worthy of mention after a General Election in which twenty-one Communist candidates forfeited their deposits, and not one member of that "Party" came within thousands of votes of being returned, but for the fact that its appearance was intended as a reply to the determination of the Labor Party as a whole, under the inspiration of their leader, not to tolerate Communist influence in any shape or form within the Labor Movement. Attempt after attempt by a handful within the Party to alter the decree refusing membership to Communists has been defeated, and over and over again Mr. MacDonald has set his face unflinchingly against any flirtation with the rabble which compose the Communist ranks.

"Communism is the native growth of reactionary soil," he stated recently, "it is a scraggy and spiky bush that grows up under the political conditions of dictatorship, of an elaborate police and spy system, of exile and political prosecution and persecution.

"Communism in Russia is Tzardom with the victims on the seats of authority, using both Cheka and Siberia for their own purposes. As the responsible Government settles down to handle the practical problem of administration it departs from this, but the irresponsible revolutionary high priests of Communist doctrines who control the Third International have abandoned no delusions which possessed them when they overthrew the Russian Government ten years ago.

"This origin of Russian Communism goes down to the roots. Democracy and it cannot go together. When its ballot-boxes, and press, and

courts of justice are open it may continue its name, but its spirit and its methods will have changed.

"Another unbridgeable difference between Communism and the Labor Party is the belief of the former that a radical reorganization of Society must be preceded by a revolution of force in order to seize political power. Upon that the Labor Party makes two decisive observations.

"First of all, what cannot be done by the ballot-box cannot be done by a revolution, and, secondly, what is sought to be done by a revolution cannot be done even if the revolution succeeds."

After contrasting the theories behind the political and industrial policies of the Soviet Government with those of the Labor Party, Mr. MacDonald proceeded:

"The two policies are irreconcilable. No compromise is possible between them. They belong to two totally different political inheritances. Our inheritance is the democratic one; theirs the autocratic one. Our method is that of changing public opinion under the influence of reason, conscience and imagination; theirs is that of the individual will hardened and sharpened by dogma, breaking its way through barriers and establishing itself by the exercise of dictatorial power.

"Thus, the conflict does not arise from diversity of remote aim or goal, but from the day-to-day attitude we take to our tasks. It is raised by every move we make either in Parliament or on an industrial council. That is why there is no possibility of accommodation between the British Labor Movement and Communism—and Moscow knows it."<sup>10</sup>

From all such attempts to weaken his authority within the Labor Movement, Ramsay MacDonald emerged with an added prestige and an enhanced strength.

In 1926 he celebrated his sixtieth birthday, and the Party, possibly with this criticism in mind, made a presentation to the ex-Prime Minister. In handing him a cheque for £60 and a bouquet of sixty roses, J. R. Clynes remarked that "Mr. MacDonald's work had been long and honored and full of the most affectionate service. This is not the moment to try and estimate it, for his best and greatest work has still to be begun. That greater work will be started when, as the head of the Second

<sup>10</sup> *Sunday Graphic*, March 18th, 1928.

Labor Government—not, I believe, to be long delayed—Mr. MacDonald will find himself not struggling with a minority of followers, but leading a majority, and therefore able to give full effect to the wishes of the Labor Party Conferences which he had continuously attended.”

His unchallenged position to-day is not due merely to the success with which he has repulsed attacks upon the policy he has laid down for Labor. Not a little of his strength is due to his sound statesmanship in the face of four and a half years of hopeless Opposition.

“I can assure the Government,” he declared during the Debate on the King’s Speech which followed the opening of the Fourth Session of Parliament in 1928, “that the matters which they have left out, these large social questions, will not be forgotten by the Opposition, and, as the days go on, as the weeks go on, as the months go on, we shall fight them, stage by stage, day by day. It will have to be done, and the elections will come as they have been coming, and the Government majority, and the Government support will go down, down, down. Already in three by-elections this year their support has gone down by 10,000 votes, and the only way in which this speech can be regarded as a fitting symbol of the Government’s mind is that it is going down slowly, steadily, but persistently to nothingness. When the time comes for the country to say whether a Government which can produce a King’s Speech like this under social conditions like those in which we live, ought to have the country’s confidence, then the country, I am perfectly certain, will give its reply in a sound, emphatic, and determined negative.”

A few days later, on February 13th, in a speech devoted to the problem of unemployment, the leader of the Labor Party indicted the Baldwin Government for its failure to remedy the plight of the workless. This question of unemployment probably played a bigger part than any other problem in Labor’s Election successes that were to come, and the Labor Party were ceaseless in their demands that a bold policy should be pursued to meet the obvious



and urgent need of the distressed areas, and to reduce the pitiful unemployment figures, still well over the million mark.<sup>11</sup>

"We are faced with a grave and pressing problem of Unemployment," Mr. MacDonald declared. "The Government can say what they like about employment, about the 600,000 or 800,000 increase in registered people, but that does not get them out of their responsibility towards 1,100,000 people who have got to live whether the Government like it or not. We are living under conditions and under systems to-day, that, so far from having been accepted, never were accepted. When it started, over one hundred years ago, you had your revolts and you have had your revolts right up to the present time. Even your own Disraeli, in one of the trashiest volumes of novels ever written, showed an appreciation of the two nations that are a direct result of the condition of things you are going into the Lobby to-night in order to support.

"When you ask the Government what their policy is, they have said up till now—'We have no policy of National Relief. We are going to leave the million unemployed alone.' We have reminded the Government of their speeches at the General Election—that they were aware of a problem of Unemployment, and would be sleepless in trying to get the remedies for that problem. Up to now, they have done nothing for the problem in our central industries, iron and steel, and above all coal, even in face of a million odd unemployed. Now, after four or five years, they have listened to us, and have admitted that the problem in the distressed areas demands something to be done for it. The break, the crash, is with us, and now these Right Honorable Gentlemen will come down in a body and say, 'Yes, the house is crashing, disease has broken out, we cannot afford now to light our streets in the mining areas. We are, therefore, going to make inquiries. At the end of three years we are going to make inquiries to see if anything can be done. If so, how much and what consequential changes are to take place in local government after our financial adjustments have taken place.'

<sup>11</sup> Those who are interested in the policy which Mr. MacDonald and the Labor Party have advocated for dealing with the question should study the speech made by Philip Snowden in the House of Commons on July 31st, 1924, with which Mr. MacDonald has publicly associated himself, and also to Mr. MacDonald's own speeches which will be found in Hansard for February 13th and December 20th, 1928. In these speeches the leader of the Labor Party has outlined in detail the views of Labor upon this crucial domestic problem.

"It is therefore very important to look at the facts and to recognize the fact that people living fifty years from now, looking back on these days, will say that we are going through an industrial revolution as well marked as the industrial revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century; revolutions caused by exactly the same scientific and industrial changes that caused the first revolution—power, particularly associated with transport. Recognizing the fact that we are going through a revolution of power and transport, which of necessity means displacement and disturbance of labor, we say to the Government—'Be different from the Governments of over one hundred years ago, and recognize the fact that the Government have a national concern to deal with Unemployment, to deal with the transference and to deal with the change so far as to bridge over from the old state of things to the new state of things.' The Government say, 'No, we are fitting the new industry to the old by lengthening hours, by reducing wages'—in other words, by heaping up the burden on the backs of the wage-earners of this country. We shall never tolerate that or agree to it."

Reference must be made to another speech of a different kind delivered by MacDonald at this time. This was his oration on the death of Lord Oxford, in which he laid the tribute of the Labor Party on the bier of a lifelong opponent—a tribute which was pregnant with that fine spirit which underlies British politics and which overleaps the barriers of Party interests in honoring the memory of a great Parliamentarian and honorable foe.

"As he passes from our ken and we bid him adieu," said Mr. MacDonald, "we have room in our hearts only for thought of the parting and not for the deeds done by him in the body. He was a sturdy champion whose mellow mind and rich, sonorous oratory so often lulled our watchful intelligence to sleep, and we gave him—how often did we not?—our applause, forgetful of the gulf that separated us and all the challenges that would presently be thrown by us at him when the magic of his oratory ceased to operate."<sup>12</sup>

"He was a party leader who, in his most stressful moments, never used weapons that were not honorable, nor selected appeals that were base or cheap. Through long months of severe national stress and

<sup>12</sup> Hansard, February 16th, 1928.

heavy personal anxiety made more poignant by sore bereavement, he bore a manly part in conducting the affairs of the State. He served his State with loyal rectitude, and he carried into the comparative retirement of his last years a serene and spacious dignity. His death, we may say without much exaggeration, snaps the link which binds this generation to the past. He carries with him to the grave the demeanor, the attitude and the spirit of the generation which has almost disappeared from our midst. In vigor and in demeanor, in mind, in all his abundant gifts, he was the cultured gentleman, a man of the world who, in no turmoil or trial, lost distinction.

"What an imperturbable personality he had, with what an eye of humor, of toleration and of stoicism he looked upon men, and how human was the man when once you knew him. If we were to permit ourselves to follow him into the shades, we might see him meeting those whose glorious company he has now joined with a quiet, genial greeting, and in a placid foregathering I can imagine him entertaining them with many a quietly bubbling tale of the ongoings of this weak but most delectable world. With these words, may I add our sympathies with the bereaved family who now mourn his departure."

Those years that separated 1925 from 1929 were an interregnum, but they brought no respite to the most hard-working member of the House of Commons. How fully he was giving his strength to the Party was brought home to all his friends by the illness which overtook him during his visit to the United States in 1927.

He arrived there, tired out and physically shattered, to seek rest and refreshment. Before he had time to regain his fitness he became infected by a disease then rampant in the Middle West.

Its development was rapid. He was taken faint and rushed to hospital, where he was inoculated. For days he hovered between life and death (in the words of a close friend, "He will never have a narrower squeak"), and then gradually his sturdy Scottish constitution asserted itself and he recovered.

The disease was very wasting, and when, upon being allowed up for the first time, he saw his legs, he was horrified to realize what havoc he had endured. His friends were even more appre-

hensive when they saw an aged and feeble leader walking with the aid of a stick down the gangway of the ship which brought him to Southampton.

Mr. MacDonald found the true recipe for recovery after that illness in the air of his native Lossiemouth, which for him has always been the finest medicine. And six months later all his customary vigor and power were there again at the service of Labor.

It is characteristic of the man that while in the House of Commons his every plea for a more generous attitude to the wage-earners, the workless, and those suffering from the continued social abuses in our midst, were falling upon the deaf ears of a mechanical Conservative majority, he was already looking ahead to the next General Election.

Once again, despite the heavy responsibilities and ceaseless work which he was forced to shoulder as the Parliamentary leader, he undertook to provide the Party with a policy, comprehensive and challenging, upon which it could appeal to the electorate to reverse the "panic" verdict of 1924, and give Labor not only office but power.

During a brief Christmas holiday in December 1927, spent at Lossiemouth, the scene of so many momentous decisions in his life, he reviewed the problems facing those who spoke in the name of democracy, and drafted in outline the all-embracing program since placed before the country under the title "Labor and the Nation."

Whether or not it is true, as has been said of this *tour de force* in projected reform, that "seven governments in seven periods of office could not put half of it into force," *Labour and the Nation* is like to remain for some time to come the most comprehensive statement of Labor aims ever published. Many will agree that in providing the inspiration for this remarkable document, and, further, in drafting in its original form all but four or five sections of it himself, the man whose hand prepared the Resolution that brought the Party into being has laid the cornerstone to a great triumphal arch.



The program is too long to be printed here. Its twenty thousand words include so many statements vital to an appreciation of the aims underlying the Party's activities that it must be studied as a whole. A summary of its provisions, however, was issued by the Party for the General Election of 1929, under the title of *Labour's Appeal to the Nation*, and this abridged version is reproduced elsewhere in this volume.

Here I quote only the closing passages of the longer version, a reaffirmation of the moral appeal which first gave the Party life, and which no one is more determined than Mr. MacDonald to keep in the forefront of its appeal to-day:

"The Labor Party will not be content, however, merely to place political democracy beyond the reach of assault, important though it knows that task to be. It holds that the indispensable corollary of political democracy—and ultimately, indeed, the only sure guarantee for its survival—must be the abolition of the gross disparities of wealth that shock all thoughtful men and women to-day, and such a reconstruction of the industrial system as will secure to the mass of the workers the reality, and not merely the name, of freedom. It stands for the systematic and unremitting use of political power to abolish social privilege and economic tyranny, and to create a society in which the treasures of civilization shall be, not the monopoly of a class, but the heritage of the nation. It is to the attainment of these ends that the Labor Party's policy is directed. It is by its success in attaining them that that policy is to be judged.

"The Labor Party by no means underestimates the vital importance of specialized knowledge and technical skill. On the contrary, it knows that only by the fullest utilization of science in all its manifestations can the ordered freedom which is its ideal be achieved. Throughout its history, it has fought for the extension and improvement of educational facilities against the apathy or hostility of Capitalist Governments, and to-day, as in the past, it demands the most generous endowment of the pursuit of knowledge, and the widest possible dissemination of education and culture. But it is convinced that, in industry, as in politics, government by consent is not only more humane, but actually more efficient, than autocracy, and that the rich diversities of human capacity and character will achieve their full development only

when arbitrary inequalities of circumstance and condition have been swept away.

"To its faith in personal liberty and social equality it joins, what is no less essential to a civilized society, the conviction that the law of life is cooperation, and that the progress of mankind is to be achieved, not through the struggle for personal gain or individual self-aggrandizement, but by the deliberate organization of the resources of the whole community in the service of all. It is on such foundations, the Labor Party holds, that the Socialist Commonwealth of the future must be built. It appeals to men and women of good-will in all classes of the community to aid it to accomplish that indispensable task."

No one would question MacDonald's sympathy towards the suffering which a large section of our population has endured during the last decade. He is, however, too great a statesman to limit his mind to the boundaries of physical poverty and hardship, of purely material problems. Nor does he forget that the early success of the Party was largely due to the ideals which lit in the minds of men and women a sure and certain hope of a better to-morrow.

First and foremost in his mind is the desire to keep moral considerations steadily to the fore. The Labor Movement was not created merely to secure better wages, or shorter hours, or more houses, important as these things are rightly held to be. It came, and it grew, because Labor declared its intention to change the balance of society so that property should mean a little less than it does and human health and happiness a little more. That aim Mr. MacDonald still regards as transcending all others.

Subject to the steadfast adherence to this ideal, the passages in *Labour and the Nation* nearest to his heart, if any portion of the program can be described as more vital than the rest, are those outlining Labor's policy on three questions which would have engaged the attention of his Cabinet in the autumn of 1924 had not the first Labor Government suffered defeat at the polls.

These are the problems of Peace, and the general pacification of the world as a preliminary to Disarmament; the reduction of unemployment by a bold policy of national development, and the

creation of a special Committee, similar in scope and power to the Imperial War Council, to coordinate the task of examining schemes for improvements and keeping Britain's transport and other services up-to-date; and lastly, the institution of a new era in the coal industry in order to put into operation the reforms which Labor declares are vital to the future of the coalfields and the prosperity of the miners and their families.

A more detailed outline of the Labor Party's proposals for dealing with these matters will be found in Mr. MacDonald's election address to the electors of the Seaham Division, referred to later in this chapter.

Although out of office, Ramsay MacDonald did not have to wait for the verdict of the elections in order to re-define, in circumstances which gave an impressive urgency to his words, his views upon European peace.

On October 15th, 1928, standing before the historic Speaker's desk of the German Reichstag—the desk from which Germany's declaration of war had been announced fourteen years before—the leader of His Majesty's Opposition pleaded for peace and friendship among the nations.

"The sooner we get the shadows of the Great War off the stage of European politics the better," he declared. "We must liquidate at once the war legacy of problems and rid ourselves of the question of the occupied German territory, the question of reparations, the question of war debts.

"We must settle that once and for all, and put away on a high shelf the war and everything connected with it. If not, cannot Europe be asked to look after herself?

"World disarmament, apart from being a question of wisdom, is also a question of honor. You Germans have disarmed, not only as a result of the last war, but also because when you signed the Treaty of Versailles you received the promise of all the other Allies that they would put themselves in the same position. This obligation to disarm must be fulfilled by Great Britain, not only in the letter, but in the spirit.

"The greatest obstacle in the way of disarmament is that we all fear the risks of peace more than we fear the risks of war. It is the first

task of European statesmen to change and to persuade their peoples to prefer the risks of peace to those of war.

"I am speaking for myself alone, but I am not afraid to say that under no circumstances shall I ever agree to any proposal to enforce the stipulations of the Peace Treaty by an appeal to arms. The time has now come for Germany, France and Great Britain to denounce the methods of suspecting one another in their hearts while paying tribute with their lips.

"It is not Great Britain's policy to make alliances with single nations or with groups of nations. Her policy is to further peace by cooperating with all the democratic countries of the world. There are essential differences between the British people and the German people. It must henceforth be our aim to respect those differences and not allow them to make us rivals, but to see that we shall become friends, supplementing each other's qualities."

Speaking at Derby a month later, on November 10th, Mr. MacDonald returned to the question and delivered his verdict on the foreign policy of the Government:

"Ever since the Government came into office, our diplomacy had been drifting more and more back to the conditions that preceded 1914. It has been going back to that kind of diplomatic handling that in the end meant war."

On October 30th, 1928, Ramsay MacDonald was formally adopted as candidate for the Seaham Division, formerly represented by Sidney Webb. Commenting upon newspaper statements that in leaving Aberavon he was flying from an unsafe seat to a safe one, he said:

"As usual, the newspapers are wrong. They imagine what they publish. I am leaving one kind of safe seat for another kind of safe seat. My seat in South Wales is as safe as the Bank of England, but it requires a great deal of time to look after. Like Mr. Webb, I am not as young as I was: like Mr. Webb, my hands are full of many things, and I cannot find time to look after the constituency myself."

For three months, at the close of 1928, political controversies were hushed by the serious illness of the King, which united every



section of the nation in anxious sympathy, and called forth a demonstration of loyalty from all classes which will not soon be forgotten.

With other prominent members of all Parties, Ramsay MacDonald voiced the hopes and fears of those anxious days. In a tribute of homage to the Throne, made in the course of a speech at the 1917 Club, he said:

"Those of us who have had the great pleasure of knowing the King personally feel at a moment like this, when he is walking through very deep shadows, how extraordinarily well he has done his work as a Constitutional Monarch; how absolutely impartially he has always done that work, and how in the doing of it he has knit us to him not as an official, not as the great dignified form of the head of the State, but as one who belongs to his nation and has tried all his life and in all his actions to carry out national responsibility and advance national interests.

"There is not a member of the old Labor Cabinet who would not, I am sure, join in our prayers that bulletin after bulletin will show him advancing towards complete health and strength."

With the dawn of 1929 it became evident that the appeal to the electorate would not be long delayed. The Baldwin Government, which had the previous year extended the franchise by giving the vote to women at the age of twenty-one, remained in office long enough to place the De-Rating Bill upon the Statute Book, and to permit Winston Churchill to introduce his fifth Budget in April. Parliament was dissolved on May 10th, but the actual election campaign began a full month earlier with the three Party leaders each apparently confident of a measure of success at the polls.

The Conservatives expected a certain loss of seats, knowing that they could not hold all the gains which had fallen to them in the "landslide" of 1924. Their estimate, as made public by Stanley Baldwin in his Drury Lane speech opening the campaign, was a majority of about sixty in the new Parliament. The Liberals, united and enthusiastic under the vigorous leadership of Lloyd George—and fighting upon a "two-plank" platform of a bold Peace policy and the pledge to conquer Unemployment—

confidently expected to hold the balance in the new House, with a minimum of 120 members. Labor made no rash prophecies, MacDonald contenting himself with predicting an advance "all along the line," and urging the electorate to give Labor an absolute majority.

In a speech made to a great audience in the Albert Hall on April 27th, Ramsay MacDonald outlined the Labor Party program.

"There are three teams in the field, but only two are effective teams," declared Labor's leader, with a topical allusion to the fact that he spoke on Cup-final Night. "One represents the Government; it is a team of standstill reaction. The other team represents the Labor Party, the team that has vision and a conception of social justice applied in a fuller manner than has hitherto been seen.

"The first point in our program," he continued, "is unemployment. That is the thing that bulks largest in the mind of the Labor Party, and will receive the first attention of the Labor Government.

"Who raised the question of the unemployed in politics first of all? Keir Hardie and the Labor Party. Our Party has never allowed unemployment to sleep as a political issue."

Having thus placed unemployment in the forefront of Labor's program, he went on to deal with other aspects of Labor's policy. "We would establish a powerful and authoritative Labor Office at Geneva," he declared, and in another passage: "We want peace in Europe, including diplomatic relations with Russia."

Turning again to Home Affairs, Mr. MacDonald said:

"I do not need to talk about housing, because you know my views and those of the Labor Party. We shall continue the housing program that we started until, in round figures, we have made good the shortage which now exists of about one million houses so far as the working classes are concerned.

"The experimental stage of pensions is over. Waste and overlapping and gaps have to be ended. The Labor Government, for instance, will not refuse widows a pension because their dead husbands were born on the thirty-first of one month instead of the first day of the next.

"As to education, we are prepared and anxious to carry on the policy that was begun by Sir Charles Trevelyan in the Labor Ministry."

"I want a majority," declared MacDonald, in the concluding passage of a great speech. "I want freedom from political intrigue, whether from a Communist Left, or a Liberal or Tory Right. Labor stands on its own principles. Labor has its own point of view, its own methods, and its own ideals. I ask you to give us, by the exercise of your reason, power to surmount those evils and to make this land and the people of this land an inspiration, a guide, and the envy of the whole world."

On May 10th, Mr. MacDonald issued his Election Address to the electors of the Seaham Division, in which he outlined the immediate tasks to which a Labor Government would devote its energies. The projects put forward therein are likely to occupy the political stage for some time to come, and the address is therefore reproduced verbatim elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

Its concluding passage revealed MacDonald's sure belief that Labor was going to be the victor at the polls:

"You have to elect a new Government. Is it to be reactionary, or is it to be Labor? None else is possible. They try to disturb your nerves and your judgment about Labor and Socialism, but by so doing they only insult your intelligence. The stability of this nation is not so ramshackle, nor is its democratic machinery so useless, as those upset by the folly of their own nightmares imagine. The voice of the scare-monger is indeed the voice of the complacent person interested in the continuance of all our wrongs. Progress is the condition of the continued existence of Society. Each generation hands over problems to the next to solve, and that next wins the gratitude of humanity only in so far as it applies wider, higher, and deeper ideas of social unity in the solution of these problems. The paralyzed mind which, in face of all our distress and the urgency of our vital unsolved problems, can only gasp in terror 'Safety First,' is the apostle of stagnation and the creator of revolution. The nation needs a more faithful and stimulating lead than that, and the Labor Party gives it."

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix I.

A day or so later the abridged version of *Labour and the Nation*, already mentioned and reproduced elsewhere, was issued to the electorate under the title of *Labour's Appeal to the Nation*. It contained a threefold scheme for dealing with Unemployment, and a compressed account of Labor's aims upon such matters as Housing, Agriculture, International Peace, Taxation, Education, Industry, Pensions, the Taxation of Land Values, and other questions. It may justly be described as a first and immediate instalment selected from the many projects within the pages of the more detailed program.<sup>14</sup>

Having launched the campaign in London and in his own constituency, Ramsay MacDonald set out upon another great tour of the country, during which he traveled from the North of Scotland to the Bristol Channel, and back to Northumberland. Everywhere he was received by large and enthusiastic crowds. He made half a dozen big speeches every day, and in them all he kept Unemployment and Peace to the fore, and renewed his appeal for an absolute majority so that Labor's policy could be carried out without alliances.

At a great meeting held in the St. Andrew's Hall, Glasgow, on May 15th, Ramsay MacDonald replied to a speech which Baldwin had made at Newcastle, criticizing Labor's Nationalization policy. "We are Socialists and we are proud of our parentage," declared the leader of the Labor Party, who dealt at length with the history of nationalization in Britain and other lands.

"I ask for your help," he concluded, "I want a majority. If you ask us to shoulder the burdens, the very heavy burdens, burdens considerably heavier than they were even in 1924 as a result of the five years that have elapsed since then—if you ask us to shoulder these burdens you must be fair with us. Make us responsible to you and not responsible to artificial and very often conspired Coalitions of other parties. Put us in a position that we are responsible to the constituencies, and we will accept that responsibility and will do our best to carry it out. And I say to you that it is my firm conviction that at this moment with

<sup>14</sup> For full text, see Appendix J.



international problems as they are, with domestic problems as they are, with problems of family life as they are, homes, housing, education, public life, industrial peace, confidence from one end of the State to another that justice is being done, and that the scales of justice are even and not loaded—under these circumstances, to-day I believe most profoundly, my friends, that a Labor Government, not only in office, but in power, will do the best to ease and soothe the heart, the lives, the souls of the people; will do the best to build up an international policy from this land so wise, so sane, so courageous that our influence will rise, rise and rise, and that once again our own beloved land will step out and be regarded by all the nations of the world as a reliable leader in everything that makes for goodwill, peace and international righteousness.”

At Oban, where he concluded a Scottish tour one thousand miles long, he declared: “One of the essentials of peace is that this country should lead. It is not enough for us to follow. Lord Cushenden has said that he has been instructed by the Government not to oppose any proposal regarding disarmament made by any nation that is accepted by other nations. If that is your Foreign policy you might just as well put up the shutters of the Foreign Office and let it go to sleep. One thing I shall do, if it be that I am going to be the head of the Government again, will be to guarantee never to issue such instructions to a Foreign Secretary. My instructions would be, ‘Make up your mind what your new proposal is going to be, make it wise, practical and just, applicable to the conditions of the world. Put it on the table at Geneva, see that the other nations’ representatives understand it, negotiate with them and get them by your negotiations to accept it, to sign the documents, and then come home with peace as a result of your efforts.’ ”

At what a Liberal newspaper called a “crowded and enthusiastic” meeting at Manchester, on May 24th, he said:

“The Labor Party has made Unemployment its foremost domestic plank. When it was in office in 1924 it produced its program within a month or two of its being in office and that program stands still, and has stood all the time, as the program that the Labor Party will carry through.

"It includes housing, land drainage, electrification, reorganization and reconditioning of railways and the coordination of the whole of the transport system upon a national basis, new roads and bridge improvements, reorganization of the mining industry, afforestation associated with small holdings, assistance by agreements with the Dominions for those who wish to try their fortunes in a new land. That is our program, and if we are not saying very much about it, it is because it has been published from the housetops and we do not withdraw one single pledge regarding it."

One who was present at some of the great meetings of that tour wrote that "the fiery cross was indeed well aflame. A sight of the great Bingley Hall meeting at Birmingham served to illumine the whole electoral field. The Chief himself was in extraordinary form. It seemed incredible that he had already traveled so many hundred miles and had spoken at so many meetings—most unbelievable of all, that he had already addressed a dozen meetings that very day. He has many achievements for the Party's welfare to his credit, and this great journey of hope and cheer is one of the finest. He seemed to gather up within himself all the fire and confidence that moved the old pioneers and appealed to the enthusiastic multitudes with all their united eloquence."<sup>15</sup>

The closing speech of Ramsay MacDonald's campaign was broadcast from the Newcastle Station of the British Broadcasting Corporation on May 28th, and the resonant voice, a little tired maybe, with its spice of Scottish brogue, was probably heard by the greatest number of electors ever addressed by a Party leader in a single speech.

"We do not believe that a nation can flourish on the poverty of its masses," he declared. "Empty pockets are not only poverty, but breed poverty. Our own backs and stomachs still are the most neglected and yet the most profitable of our markets. Those who believe that Safeguarding or Protection is any aid to the development of that market had better study protected countries, where wages are low, unemployment is habitual, and poverty even worse than it is here. Unemployment insurance is not a dole, it is a benefit which has been paid for

<sup>15</sup> J. S. Middleton in *The New Leader*, June 7th, 1929.

just like life insurance. These payments must be made adequate for the purpose in order to safeguard our people against the demoralization of charity. We have concentrated this policy into two points and they stand as representing our purpose. Work first of all, but if no work, maintenance."

In view of the result of the polling which took place two days later, this speech may well prove to be historic. In it, Labor's foremost advocate stated Labor's case to the whole nation, and no quotations would do justice to the message which it carried to the homes of Britain. I am therefore including a verbatim report among the speeches at the end of this volume.<sup>16</sup>

It will be long before those who stood with the watching crowd that surged round Trafalgar Square on the night of May 30th, 1929, waiting for the first results of the battle, will forget the experience.

"Oxford City, Conservative, no change," came first. There followed "Bury, Conservative, no change," and quickly "Great Yarmouth, Liberal Gain from Conservatives." For an instant the Labor supporters wondered whether their high hopes were doomed to disappointment. Then they remembered that these were seats which the most optimistic had not expected to come their way.

A few minutes' delay, filled by snatches of song to relieve the tension. Then, "North Salford, Labor Gain," followed by pandemonium as it was realized that Ben Tillett, Chairman of the T.U.C., had scored the first victory for Labor.

Even then the millions of Labor supporters waiting for the results up and down the country did not dare to raise their hopes as high as the actual achievement. Three Salford seats gained by Labor—the hitherto impregnable Tory citadel of Birmingham stormed, with the Tory Minister of Labor among the defeated and Sir Austen Chamberlain "in" by forty-three votes only.

During the next two hours Mr. MacDonald's prediction that

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix K.

Labor would advance "all along the line" was fulfilled to the letter. The industrial Boroughs of the North went almost solidly to Labor. That was only the beginning. Labor was winning in the South—sweeping through Acton, South Hammersmith, Swindon, seats which had been Tory since the days of 1906—since, indeed, the beginning of political time.

When the last of the overnight results was known, it was found that Labor had won 112 seats out of 200. The question of "Will the Government be defeated?" was forgotten. The Baldwin Administration had been defeated by one o'clock that morning, and already the question was changed to "Can Labor do it?"—meaning, would Labor have an absolute majority of the new House, or would the country districts snatch victory, complete and overwhelming, from their grasp.

Few expected the later results to show Labor in a majority, for the scales were weighted too heavily against them. Both Conservatives and Liberals had poured out propaganda in wooing the rural voters. And the countryside still consisted mainly of "backward areas" so far as the message of Labor was concerned.

All the following day the issue remained in the balance, with Labor maintaining its lead. Labor gains came through from agricultural areas—Norfolk, Northampton, Lincolnshire, and even rural Wales. Malcolm MacDonald won at Bassetlaw, a mainly rural seat. In London, after the final result had been announced, it was found that Labor had won thirty-four seats, as against twenty-two in 1923, their previous best. In Lancashire, Ormskirk and Mossley—the latter the stronghold of the redoubtable Austin Hopkinson—went Labor for the first time, while of the eight two-member seats in the county, Labor won seven outright and W. Jowett, K.C., the Liberal victor of the eighth—one of the two Preston seats—joined the Labor Cabinet as Attorney-General a day or two later.

Scotland brought eight gains and one loss during the day. Sowerby and Cleveland, two agricultural seats in the North, returned the Labor men. And so the story of Labor's successes



continued almost to the end, when the last results came from Wales, the West Country, and Northern Scotland and robbed the Party of a majority.

The Stock Exchange reported "no business," and stated that its members were too busy watching the results to attend to their affairs. Industry stood still as the fight progressed. It was, as the leader of the victorious Party said, "an inspiring moment" for all within its ranks.

The Labor Party missed its majority by eighteen seats, but on May 31st, 1929, in ten hours, the beliefs, hitherto hugged to the Conservative bosom, that "Labor would never get a majority," and that "Labor could win in industrial seats but nowhere else," were shattered for all time. The crowds who stood around the pavements reading the latest results were watching the birth of a new chapter of British history.

Before polling day one of the shrewdest and most experienced of Labor's headquarters officials carefully analyzed the prospects in every constituency. His first "review" of the prospects showed 291 seats that *might*, given the expected swing of opinion against the Conservative Government, be won for Labor. Later, when the totals of men and women voters on the new register were available, he reexamined the list and produced a revised total of 267 seats that with any degree of good fortune, would be represented in the new House of Commons by supporters of Mr. MacDonald.

When the final results came to hand, they showed that the Labor Party had been returned 288 strong, a net gain of 126 seats. Compared with this staggering triumph, the successes of 1923 paled into insignificance. The Conservatives had returned with 260 seats, a net loss of 140 seats. The Liberal Party failed to recover its old position or to fulfil its own confident expectations. They had hoped for 120 seats and had gained only twelve, thus holding the balance in the new House of Commons with fifty-eight seats, a disappointing result partly due to the unfairness of an electoral system which gave it one seat for every

90,000 votes, as against 32,000 for each Conservative elected, and 22,000 for each Labor member.<sup>17</sup>

The votes secured by the various Parties in the first General Election held under complete adult suffrage, were:

Conservative .....	8,591,052
Labor .....	8,331,480
Liberal .....	5,257,536
Independent .....	260,711
Communist .....	50,614

For Ramsay MacDonald the triumph could scarcely have been greater. His policy had received the sweeping endorsement of the country, and in his own constituency, Seaham, he was returned by a majority of 28,794 votes, the largest recorded in the election. It is of interest, moreover, in view of newspaper comments at the time when he went from Aberavon to Seaham, that his successor at Aberavon held the seat with a majority of 9,039 over Liberal and Conservative opponents.

Addressing his constituents after the declaration of the poll at Seaham Harbour, Mr. MacDonald said:

"Things are changing, and I am very proud to be associated with you in the change, to regard you as my constituents, and to be your representative in the House of Commons. Did Labor people ever live in such an inspiring moment as this? When you read the figures this morning you saw that the Labor polls in the country were above the Conservative polls and were twice the Liberal polls. Did you ever think you would live to see that? Honestly, I did not, and I thank God it has been done.

"Make no mistake about it, it is not going to be all beer and skittles, especially for me. You have finished the fight, I am afraid I am only beginning to bear the burden, but I will do it cheerfully, and I know I

<sup>17</sup> The complete table of results, and comparison with the old House, is as follows:

	<i>New House</i>	<i>Old House</i>
Labor .....	288	162
Conservative .....	260	400
Liberal .....	58	46
Independents .....	9	7

shall have your sympathy, your support and your backing through thick and thin."

Mr. Arthur Henderson, the Secretary of the Party, issued the following message to the electors on the results:

"At last Labor has become the greatest party of the State. In terms of seats gained we have slightly exceeded my own bedrock calculations made before the election. The magnificence of the result stands out when it is remembered how colossal were the Press and financial resources thrown into the scale against the Labor Party. The figures confirm my belief that the country was determined to give Labor its chance of proving not only its capacity to govern, but also its sincere intention to redeem its pledges. Labor's carefully considered plans of social reconstruction and industrial reorganization and development have undoubtedly caught the imagination of the people, and its emphatic call for international peace, based upon arbitration and disarmament, brought forth a wonderful response, in particular by the women electors."

There were wild scenes at King's Cross when Ramsay MacDonald returned to London from his constituency. The crowd which gathered to cheer the victor exceeded all expectations, and for a time neither police nor railway officials could cope with the surging mass of excited sympathizers. Mr. MacDonald himself was saved from personal injury only with the greatest difficulty, while personal friends who had come to greet him were swept away by the throng.

At least twelve thousand people were present when the train in which he traveled from the North arrived. Escape was impossible, even had the tired and triumphant leader wished it, and with his escort he was literally swept off his feet. Attempts were made to carry him shoulder-high; MacDonald himself began to speak: "I am very grateful, but—" He got no further, for the crowd closed in upon him again, and he was carried along by sheer weight of numbers towards the waiting motor-car.

Every single person in that crowd knew that they were welcoming Britain's new Prime Minister. In the face of the election



MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD, ACCOMPANIED BY MISS ISHBEL MACDONALD, HOSTESS AT NO. 10, DOWNING STREET, LEAVES WATERLOO EN ROUTE FOR A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES AFTER THE FALL OF HIS FIRST GOVERNMENT





figures, who could doubt it? And so it was. For about twenty-four hours a half-hearted attempt was made to get Stanley Baldwin to meet the House of Commons and present a King's Speech before resigning, but in spite of some reported support within the Conservative Cabinet, such a course was never seriously considered. The message which the electorate had sent to No. 10 Downing Street was couched in terms too definite to be misunderstood.

On June 4th Mr. Baldwin placed his resignation in the hands of the King, and on the following day Mr. MacDonald was sent for and consented to form a Government. In progressive circles the change was hailed with pleasure—even by those who had been most bitterly disappointed at the poor representation which the Liberal Party had gained at the Election. "Now that we are to have a Radical Government in this country the fresh wind of a new foreign policy will blow through the world," stated the *Manchester Guardian* as soon as Mr. Baldwin's intention to resign was known, and although Mr. MacDonald did not attempt to combine the offices of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary for a second time, and appointed Arthur Henderson to the Foreign Office in his stead, that opinion remained, for it was recognized that in matters of high policy "the voice will be Jacob's voice, but the hands will be the hands of Esau."

On June 8th the new Prime Minister broadcast through the B.B.C. an announcement on the policy of his Government, in the course of which he assured the public that his Ministers were "losing no time in grappling with the tasks that had been imposed upon them."

"Mr. Thomas has been placed at the head of the organization which will tackle and survey with energy the most practical means of dealing with unemployment," he continued, "not only by relief works, but by plans directed to national reconstruction. I and those working with me will be specially concerned with this problem.

"I have been skeptical of reducing within a year the figures of unemployment to what has been called normality. But everything that can be done will be done and that as speedily as possible. No expendi-

ture of time and energy on our part will be spared. We will avoid extravagance and will regard the money spent on reconstruction as capital sunk in the development and better equipment of the nation for its great economic tasks."

After referring to Foreign Affairs, and saying that he hoped to be able to pay a short visit to Geneva at the opening of the next meeting of the assembly of the League of Nations, the Prime Minister added that he hoped most sincerely that the nation would quietly and buoyantly go on with the task of industrial recovery and expansion.

A few days later the Prime Minister enlisted the services of the talking film to enable him both to address and be seen by a wider audience than he could reach by any other means. This speech, recorded by British Movietone News in the Prime Minister's garden at Hampstead, has since been shown throughout Great Britain, and at over a thousand cinemas in the United States, thus turning Ramsay MacDonald from a name into a personality known and "met" by countless thousands who had not before experienced the spell of this great statesman.

"I am very happy," declared the Prime Minister, "to have won the confidence of my fellow-countrymen to the extent that I have done. The Labor Party has not a majority, but the decision of the electors nevertheless is perfectly clear.

"Perhaps at this moment, which I dare say many of you imagine is a moment of great triumph, you will excuse me if I go back to days when, unfortunately, my friends, I was marching out of step with you (a reference to the war years), but I am sure you will believe me that although I was marching out of step with you, and feeling very unhappy at it, I was marching in step with my conscience, and in public life I hope the man who dares to be in a minority is not unappreciated. If we always, even in moments of great national crises, said the same thing, whether we believed it or not, it would be a very bad day indeed for the honor and uprightness of the men responsible for the conduct of public affairs in this land of ours.

"The result of the Election, however, enables me to ask for your sympathy. You know what burdens I have got to bear and I hope that

whilst you look on and watch what is being done, you will remember the poor man whose back has to bear those very heavy burdens.

"My concerns are going to be for my country—my country at home and my country as an influence abroad. At home we have to face, in a way that we have never faced before, this tremendous problem of unemployment, the problem of the great mass of our peoples housed under conditions which none of us would care to live under ourselves. Uncertain incomes, worrying outlook, and do remember, my friends, that it is not merely for six or twelve months, but thousands and thousands of these men and women, really good men and women, have to live a life which is unvaried in its monotony and its cares.

"On the international situation, upon which, as you know, I place tremendous stress, we have a great deal of work to do. Nothing has gratified me more than the cables that have come to me during the last two days from all over the world, from people of all religions, all colors and all grades of civilization.

"I can assure you that my idea is going to be to give this country a status in the world, based upon the righteousness of its actions, its enlightenment of policy and its large generous disinterestedness in helping the world, and I hope that as the result, when the time comes for me to lay down the burdens of office, that I shall have left the country in a very much better state than it was in when I took it on."

"Well, I am very glad—I was going to say to have seen you all—I have not seen you but I can imagine you," concluded the Prime Minister. "I am very glad to have met you and to have had the opportunity of saying these things to you. Good-by."

By the time the new Parliament met at the end of June, the "fresh wind of a new foreign policy" was already blowing. The Prime Minister, with his genius for recognizing "first things," had met General Dawes, the new United States Ambassador, at the opening Conference of a series at which outstanding problems affecting the relations of the two Anglo-Saxon nations, and particularly the thorny problem of naval disarmament, had been discussed in an atmosphere of goodwill, freed from the inhibitions of rival sets of experts, and the way cleared for a meeting between Mr. MacDonald and President Hoover in the autumn.

The obvious good intentions of the new British Government



called for, and immediately evoked, a corresponding goodwill on the part of the United States, with the happy result that the Prime Minister was able to announce in the House of Commons on July 24th, as one of the firstfruits of his Government, that "after a thorough examination of our naval position," the Government had decided to revise the British naval building program by suspending work on two cruisers, canceling the building of the Submarine Depot ship *Maidstone* and two submarines, and slowing down dockyard work on other naval construction.

"Already the whole field of these differences (on naval armaments) with the United States has been surveyed," stated the Prime Minister, "and the two Governments have made a fresh start on their solution. We have agreed on the principle of parity; we have agreed that, without in any way departing from the conditions of parity, a measure of elasticity can be allowed so as to meet the peace requirements of the two nations. We have determined that we shall not allow technical points to override the great public issues involved in our being able to come to a settlement. And, so soon as the rising of this House releases me from its day-to-day work, I propose to make this matter my chief concern until an issue is reached. A visit to the President of the United States is now the subject of conversation so that it may take place, when it will be most helpful to promote the cordial relations of our two countries and in particular advance the end of disarmament and peace which we hold in common."

The response of the White House to this gesture was not long in coming. On the same afternoon President Hoover expressed his "real satisfaction" at the decision of the British Government, and he announced that the United States had decided to postpone for further consideration the construction of three of the five cruisers which were to have been laid down for the United States Navy this year.

"Mr. MacDonald has not been afraid to act," said the *Daily Mail*, "and the spirit in which he has acted has been welcomed by the American public as an earnest of yet better things to come." It had taken only four weeks for the Prime Minister to

begin to collect once more, and in the same field of foreign affairs, those "feathers in the Government's cap" which the Press of Britain had awarded to him in 1924.

While Mr. MacDonald was immersed in the twin tasks of cutting the Gordian knot of disarmament and settling the legislative program of his Cabinet, Mr. Henderson, the new Foreign Minister, was getting into contact with Soviet Russia with a view to receiving an envoy empowered to clear up outstanding questions and pave the way to a resumption of diplomatic relations between London and Moscow.

Following a visit from M. Dovgalevsky, Soviet Ambassador in Paris, to London, and conversations at the Foreign Office, the negotiations were suspended on August 1st owing to the attitude of the Russian Government, which, despite the very clear wording of the original invitation, insisted on an immediate exchange of Ambassadors as a preliminary to any settlement of outstanding matters, including debts and propaganda. This method of procedure the British Government was not, with its memories of 1924, prepared to accept.

In other fields, the Government displayed a similar determination to proceed with caution. Mr. Thomas, the new "Minister of Unemployment," was engaged in examining schemes, receiving deputations, enticing money out of a Chancellor of the Exchequer whose motto was "no extravagance." The crop which Mr. Thomas is sowing will be gathered by men who would otherwise have still been "on the dole," but these unemployment plans require time to ripen. It is the same with housing. The first action of the Minister of Health was to cancel the further "cut" in the rate of the subsidy paid by the State on houses built under the Wheatley Act of 1924 announced by the late Conservative Government to take effect this autumn. Meanwhile, a bold scheme of slum clearance is promised.

Of the nature of a gesture before Labor gets down to its task was the decision to abolish the officially appointed Guardians of the Poor who had superseded the elected Guardians in certain areas where the Conservatives had suspected corruption in the

handling of relief. Labor has arranged to revert to more democratically elected bodies in these towns for the short period remaining before the duties of all Guardians pass to the County Councils. Another decision was to raise the school-leaving age to fifteen in 1931. This step was characterized by Mr. Garvin as "an historic reform for relieving unemployment, correcting the worst kinds of misemployment and making fitter workers and citizens."<sup>18</sup>

Next to the Premier, the outstanding figure on the Government side during those first four weeks has been Philip Snowden. Both in the House and outside the Chancellor of the Exchequer has shown a realization of the fact that the fate of this Parliament, and maybe of his Party for the next ten years, will be decided at the Treasury. Money and the spending of it will be the Achilles heel through which Labor will, if it is unwise or misjudges its power, be brought down. But this time the Chancellor is credited with a desire to be in office long enough to introduce not one Budget, but two—the second containing the first instalment of Labor's proposals for correcting the present inequality of wealth. Both from the dictates of strategy and conviction, therefore, it is improbable that the prestige won by the Prime Minister and Arthur Henderson in the realm of Foreign Affairs and disarmament will be dissipated through any wild excitements at the Treasury such as would cause a Liberal revolt against the Government.

Reviewing the first phase of the second MacDonald Administration, the *Times* stated "a fair verdict on the trial-run of the Government is that, although the driving has been unimpressive, the engine has not jumped the rails." Other and more friendly critics declare that already a new hope is abroad in Europe, and in this connection may be recalled the remark made to the writer shortly after the General Election by one of the leaders of the Spanish Socialist Party—"Britain is the cornerstone of democratic Europe. When she votes for democracy, we in less happy coun-

<sup>18</sup> *Observer*, July 21st, 1929.

tries carry on our work with renewed hope. When she favors reaction, it is as though our guiding star had gone."

Drama followed swiftly upon the rising of the House of Commons for the summer recess, a drama in which Mr. Snowden played the leading rôle, and for an issue which seemed to endanger the Prime Minister's work for the pacification of Europe.

The occasion was the opening of the Reparations Conference at The Hague, convened in order to approve the "Young Plan," drawn up by a Committee of Experts under an American chairman. The date was August 5th, 1929.

This Plan was designed to supersede the Dawes Scheme (under which German Reparations had been assessed since 1924) and, by making financial concessions to Germany, to stabilize the arrangements governing the amount and distribution of Reparation payments, thus paving the way to the evacuation of the remaining British, French and Belgian forces in the Rhineland and the final liquidation of the political problems arising out of the war.

Under the Young Plan, as proposed, this country, which had made successive financial sacrifices since 1920 greater than those of any other nation, would have lost a further £2,400,000 a year, most of which sum was to go in increased payments to France and Italy, secured only a fractional share of Germany's "unconditional" payments (of these "debentures" which were a first charge on all payments, five-sixths were apportioned to France), while reparations in kind would have been continued for a further period of ten years, to the detriment of Britain's "heavy" industries, on which unemployment pressed most severely.

These proposals were characterized as "utterly indefensible" by Mr. Snowden. Speaking with "great firmness" at the Opening Session of the Conference, Labor's Chancellor of the Exchequer declared: "In regard to the distribution of the annuities, the House of Commons will never agree to any further sacrifices of British interests in this matter. There are no differences of opinion between parties on this question. All British parties are agreed in proposing to wipe the slate clean of all international



debts and all reparations. That was promised in the Balfour Note, and it was declared by the Labor Party before we came into power. But so long as reparations are paid and received, and so long as debts are payable, Great Britain will insist on being fairly treated."

By that one speech, the most orthodox and unyielding Socialist and Free Trader in the whole Labor Party achieved a personal popularity among all classes in Britain, which must have embarrassed one who had had previously to fight for his beliefs every inch of the way from the obscurity of a weaver's home in a remote Yorkshire village to the Treasury Bench of the House of Commons.

Mr. Snowden's case was stronger than some of his erstwhile opponents, who blithely proclaimed this statesman's "conversion" to patriotism, imagined. Britain had ratified debt agreements with France and Italy which canceled entirely 60 per cent of the amount owed to us by the former country and 84 per cent of the Italian debt to Britain. She had already paid 200 million pounds to the United States under the terms of our settlement with that country, and this sum, under the original terms of the Young Plan, would not have been recovered. The Plan left Britain with receipts from all sources, assuming no default in Germany's "conditional" payments, sufficient to cover *future* payments to the United States, but not to recoup her for the amount already sent across the Atlantic. Britain had no objection to making further sacrifices, in common with the other nations concerned, if these were necessary. But, considering the successive and generous concessions already made, this country was not prepared to see the percentages under which the total reparations received from Germany were distributed, as fixed at the Spa Conference in 1920, altered in favor of France and Italy, and against her interests.

On this matter Mr. Snowden stood firm. For three weeks the deadlock persisted, despite many "offers," most of which sought to meet Britain's demands at the expense either of Germany or the smaller nations. To such a course Mr. Snowden

would not agree. As the prospects of the final failure of the Conference loomed nearer, with the possible serious reactions upon international good will and Mr. MacDonald's hopes for an agreed measure of disarmament, doubts were expressed in one or two quarters whether the "Iron Chancellor" was not taking too big a risk in holding out for a complete surrender to the British case.

Within the Independent Labor Party (from which body Mr. Snowden resigned some time ago) there was a difference of opinion. Some supported him, while others agreed with H. N. Brailsford's view, expressed in the *New Leader*:

"It is true that the French will receive much the greater part of the 'unconditional' payments. But is this a wholly fair way of putting it? Their claim is for reparations proper, the actual restoration of their devastated areas. Did not all of us concede that such claims stand in a wholly different class from the rest of the Allies' demands upon Germany? Has not our Socialist International repeatedly drawn this distinction? And has not the Labor Party itself in its official publications challenged the whole basis on which the British claims were reckoned? This episode is not yet over—there is still time for a return to a juster sense of proportion. Even if our financial case is wholly sound, we are not so poor that we must wreck Europe to gain £2,000,000 per annum. The Labor Government if it takes this risk will, with its own hands, end its own career of international service."

"Let us not carry matters so far as to run the risk of falling between two stools—throwing back our greater political and economic purposes for the sake of a disappointing composition on the last and smallest of our cash-claims," wrote Mr. Garvin in an article<sup>19</sup> suggesting that the Prime Minister should do "the brilliant and practical thing" by flying to The Hague to prevent, by his moderating influence and unique personal prestige, a breakdown in the Conference.

"The Prime Minister," added Mr. Garvin, "may never in his life have the chance of acting to better purpose than if he flies to-morrow to The Hague. Like no other man he can restate the

<sup>19</sup> *Observer*, August 25th, 1929.

larger issues and base the British case upon the irreducible minimum of right reason."

Mr. MacDonald resisted the insidious temptation, and instead remained content with his telegram congratulating Mr. Snowden, and assuring him of the support of a united Britain.

Agreement came on August 27th, on the very eve of the departure of several of the leading statesmen for the meeting of the Council of the League of Nations at Geneva the following week. France submitted a new set of proposals, too complex to be usefully summarized here, which conceded about 80 per cent of Mr. Snowden's demands, and this compromise, coupled with the reduction of reparation payments in kind and Italy's guarantee to take one million tons of British coal annually for three years, the Chancellor accepted.

"Mr. Snowden returns not only having gained the material fruits of victory which he set out to seek, but also having restored his country to its proper position in Europe," declared the London *Evening Standard* on the morrow of the settlement.

The financial agreement, by which Britain is to receive £2,000,000 of the £2,400,000 in dispute, was, moreover, not the only laurel won at The Hague. Mr. Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, achieved equal success in the political sphere. An agreement was reached for the evacuation of the Rhineland—by the British troops before Christmas 1929, and by the French "as soon as possible" and in no case later than June 1930. Eleven years after the signing of the Armistice the last traces of the war and its antagonisms were being obliterated—a happy augury for Mr. MacDonald's approaching disarmament discussions with President Hoover, out of which it is hoped will emerge a disarmament plan which will be accepted by all the naval Powers as the first page in a new chapter of world relations.

"It is with the potential political consequences of the Conference that Liberals no less than Labor people are most pleased," stated a correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, commenting upon this aspect of The Hague settlement. "The high temperature of the Conference, it is felt, probably corresponds to nothing permanent in the moods of the

nations concerned, and, if that is true, then a genuine start has been made in winding up the war. The Liberal-Labor conception of a British foreign policy inspired, so far as Europe is concerned, by equal friendship for Germany and France can now begin to realize itself, and if an earlier French evacuation of the Rhineland than any one had hoped for can be made an integral part of the settlement, as Germany demands, then that too must weigh heavily on the credit side of the political account. And, of course, there is much satisfaction in Labor quarters over the Italian concessions on coal deliveries. This Government will be judged on its record on unemployment, and here is a little unlooked-for assistance for Mr. Thomas."

Commenting upon the successful conclusion of the Conference a few days later, the Prime Minister said:

"Whatever may have been the feeling of people while the negotiations were actually going on, its results are undoubtedly going to be to the good of Europe and of the very greatest assistance to the League of Nations. Discussions and agreements that are to be the foundations of peace must contain in them the element of objective fair-play.

"That was the battle that the British Government had to fight and which Mr. Snowden conducted. I don't believe that it will have to be fought again. In our international discussions we shall now begin, not to impose something upon each other, but to negotiate and negotiate until the agreement that is to be reached is acceptable to everybody involved in it."

While these big events were occupying the political stage, there occurred at Elgin a ceremony which must have amply compensated the Prime Minister for the heavy responsibilities which rested upon his shoulders. This was the conferring of the freedom of that city upon the "Lossie loon" who had entered the world in a cottage not five miles beyond its boundaries.

Edinburgh and Glasgow had already done him honor, but the recognition of "his ain folk" must have been the most precious thing of all. It was his native Morayshire acknowledging the "realities beneath the trappings of office" and honoring the Scot.

Speaking after the Freedom had been conferred upon him, Mr. MacDonald referred to "tender memories and certain lonelinesses



that must be endured." Likening himself to "a swallow coming home," he said: "I come to Morayshire to refresh my mind by a stroll amidst your flowers. Whether I come homewards in winter the wild hills, the raging seas and the roaring wind are indeed flowers to me, or whether I come back in June when the yellow yarling is singing from the gorgeous golden bows of our whins or our broom, Morayshire is a garden to me.

"Whether I come later on in the year when autumn is arriving in our midst and the fields are golden with the harvest and the hillside clothed in truly royal purple, Morayshire is home to me.

"I feel perfectly certain," added Mr. MacDonald, "that when the end comes and evening dews begin to fall one will be able to look back and say it is good, and if the chance were given to start again would want no change. Only by combining reverence with idealism can we live the life we expect to live in the present."

Among those who were present to honor one of the greatest of Scotland's sons was General Dawes, who had seen so much of the Prime Minister during his first few weeks in London, and cooperated with him on the thorny question of disarmament with a good will that Britain acknowledges with joy and hope. Proposing a vote of thanks to the Lord Provost after the ceremony, General Dawes referred to the progress of the "naval talks" and the guarded statement of progress issued by Mr. MacDonald a few days before.

"When last Tuesday," remarked General Dawes, "the Prime Minister issued his statement of the nature of these naval problems, he said in it that a distinct advance had been made. I noticed shortly after a Press comment to the effect that this indicated he had no progress to report. I think we should remember that naval negotiations may have favorably advanced, though they may not have reached necessarily the proper stage for useful discussion by the Press.

"Whatever was agreed upon now as an easily understood matter of common sense and fairness, and which constituted part of a progressive simplification of the terms of the problem, was a most important step in advance. We must realize that the one unforgivable thing now would be an inadequate preparation for the proposed naval conference."

On August 31st the Prime Minister left for the Tenth Assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva, there to take the next step in his work for world peace, and for a second time to address the nations as the first representative of the British Empire.

Speaking to a pressman before leaving for the Continent, he declared, in reference to the negotiations between this country and the United States on disarmament, that "we are determined to reach an agreement," adding, "I have nothing more to say at the moment, but if the chicken is not duly hatched I shall be the most surprised man living."

Said Mr. Garvin the following day:

"It has been a great week for the Labor Government, but the next few weeks will be still greater. For them and for the world, America and Europe together. Everything else is overshadowed by the announcements which filled the American Press yesterday.<sup>20</sup> Though the final details are not cut and dried in every particular, the happy conclusion of the Naval negotiations between America and Britain is assured. It will require some time for the ordinary citizen to grasp the character and measure the significance of this event. We shall say confidently for our part, with a slight adaptation of the famous words of Fox about the fall of the Bastille, that this is one of the greatest and best things that could have happened in the world."<sup>21</sup>

The omens are favorable for the new Government. Already it has caused the "fresh wind" to blow through the Chancellories of the world, and the presence of Mr. MacDonald at No. 10 Downing Street is a sufficient guarantee that its great work for peace will continue without cessation.

There are bigger problems ahead than any yet tackled. Disarmament, Egypt, India, unemployment—any of these questions may cause difficulties, while at home Labor's advent to office unfortunately synchronized with a stoppage in the Lancashire cotton trade and threatened crises in the woollen and coal industries. It can be said that these industrial troubles will be handled more sympathetically by a Labor Government than any other, for

<sup>20</sup> Outlining the probable terms of a Naval Limitation Agreement.

<sup>21</sup> *Observer*, September 1st, 1929.

Labor understands the problems of industry and of the workers in a way, and to a degree, impossible to a capitalist party.

Evidence of the fact that Labor in office had not forgotten the "hard-ups" whose case they pleaded at Westminster throughout the earlier years, is afforded by the Prime Minister's statement on July 24th, that the first business to be taken when the House of Commons reassembles on October 29th, will be the second reading of a Bill dealing with widows' pensions. Only a tiny fragment of the hopes of Labor will be touched by that measure, but of such fragments will be the victory over poverty, sickness and want be built up.

Whatever the future may hold, it will remain true that the amazing growth of the Labor Party will be the truest monument to Ramsay MacDonald's life work. That growth is strikingly shown in the following table of results for the nine elections in which Labor has participated as a political force:

	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Members</i>
1900 .....	62,698	2
1906 .....	323,195	29
1910 (Jan.) .....	505,690	40
1910 (Dec.) .....	370,802	42
1918 .....	2,244,945	57
1922 .....	4,236,733	142
1923 .....	4,348,379	191
1924 .....	5,487,620	151
1929 .....	8,312,504	288

Will that growth continue? Prophecy would be incomplete without the answer to another question—"Will Liberalism survive?" The disappearance, or partial disappearance, of the Liberal Party would result in a big redistribution of votes between the two larger parties, and would probably check for a time the success of Labor in constituencies which the Party holds on a minority vote. But even that statement must be made with reservations, for it is by no means certain that in the north of England, at all events, the disappearance of Liberalism would

not mean a greater proportionate recruitment of strength to Labor than to the Conservatives. There is no greater political fallacy in our time than the view which assumes that all votes formerly given to the Liberal Party would, were that Party to disappear, in many constituencies accrue to the Conservatives.

Writing on the eve of the General Election of 1929, a Conservative publicist declared: "My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that the Labor Party has already passed its zenith." All that can be said in reply to criticisms of that sort is that no one conversant with the history of the Labor Party, or with its strength in the constituencies, believes that to be the case. It is far more probable that Labor, under the inspiration and guidance of the man who has steered the Party for so long, will continue to attract a steadily growing proportion of the democratic vote in this country.

At the last election Ramsay MacDonald asked for ten million votes. He got nearly eight and a half. At the next appeal to the country, whenever it comes, that ten may be achieved, although in the event of a reform of our methods of voting, resulting from the deliberations of the Electoral Enquiry set up under the chairmanship of Viscount Ullswater, or of any Pact between the two older parties, the full effects of Labor's growing strength may not be reaped until the next election but one.

Assuming that growth, will Labor hold together as a united Party, or will the divisions already apparent within its ranks cause the dissipation of its energies in internecine strife?

The question cannot be fully answered yet. But it is probable that the real strain upon the unity of the Party will come soon after the moment when it achieves complete control of the government of the country.

For the Labor Party there has been no danger up till now so grave as the danger with which it will be faced on the day when it first takes office with power. Then the various groups within, each with its own panacea for our social ills, will all demand legislation along the separate lines they consider best. When that day comes, Ramsay MacDonald or his successor will need both diplomacy



and strength of mind to avoid a disastrous "split" within the ranks. A foretaste of the divergence of views and methods—also of the measure of statesmanship—found upon the Labor benches, is revealed in the speech which James Maxton, Chairman of the Independent Labor Party, delivered at a "victory" demonstration at Glasgow following the election successes:

"I hope we will face the task of governing this country without fear or timidity, tackling the big problems with vision and determination, and putting down whatever opposition may be brought against us. The opportunity is now presented to us at once to abolish privation in our midst. A large proportion of the people who voted for me have not had a decent meal for four years. They live in houses of one apartment, and have not an income of two pounds weekly. That has got to stop and stop at once. It is not fitting that the ruling class should go in rags."

One would not suppose, from that statement, that the second Labor Government was dependent upon either Liberal or Conservative votes for the passing of every measure introduced. It is such "get-rich-quick" sentiments as these which may imperil Labor's strength in the future.<sup>22</sup>

Another possible danger in the years immediately ahead is to be found in Mr. MacDonald's own attitude to the Liberal Party. The view that "it has become a question of choosing which of two parties one has to serve" may or may not be justified—the present trend of political thought suggests that it is, and that a dramatic return to the two-party system may not be long delayed. Much

<sup>22</sup> Speaking at the Independent Labor Party Summer School at Welwyn on August 4th, 1929, Mr. Maxton, Chairman of the I.L.P., further stated, "Has any human being benefited by the fact that there has been a Labor Government in office during the past two months? I can think of nobody except two murderers who were reprieved." Asked what he would have done if he had been Prime Minister during the past two months, Mr. Maxton replied that he would have seen that the unemployed had an adequate allowance; admitted Trotsky to Great Britain; recognized Russia at once; reestablished the housing subsidy on its original basis; and raised the school age so that it would take effect during his period of office. The Government had not done all it could have done, even in a minority position." *Daily News*.



PRIME MINISTER FOR A SECOND TIME. MR. MACDONALD, ACCOMPANIED BY LORD PARMOOR AND MR. ARTHUR HENDERSON, DRIVING TO WINDSOR CASTLE IN ONE OF THE STATE LANDAUS TO HAVE AUDIENCE WITH KING GEORGE, FOLLOWING THE FORMATION OF THE MINISTRY IN JUNE, 1929



depends upon the views of this Parliament upon electoral reform, and the fate of the Liberal Party at the next General Election. The five and a half million Liberal voters who supported that Party at the election of 1929 may continue to spurn both Conservative and Labor programs and vote for the "middle course" of Liberalism. The evidence is growing, however, that many of the most virile figures in the Liberal ranks are looking to the Left and the Right. Sir William Jowett's conversion was not the first, and he will assuredly not be the last promising recruit which Labor will win from the ranks of the Party whose place it has taken in the political firmament.

Nevertheless, this expectancy of the disappearance of the Liberal Party is itself a political "gamble" as great as has been the gamble occasioned by the presence of three parties at recent elections. Whatever the fate of Liberalism as a party, it must be admitted that the electoral system under which we have lived during these latter years is not democracy, but the negation of democracy, and it may be that the historian of the future, looking back over our times, and noting that it needed ninety thousand votes to elect one Liberal in 1929, compared with only twenty-two thousand votes needed to elect one Labor M.P., will declare that the "gamble" persisted too long.

It appears to be certain, in any case, that the Labor Party is committed to a policy of vigorous independence, eschewing any alliance with any non-Socialist body, however sympathetic that section may be towards many of its aims. There may be wisdom in this decision, for the British electorate dislikes Coalitions and Pacts of every description, and it might well be that Labor as a Party would lose more than it gained if any "working arrangement" with the Liberals were attempted. Such is the opinion held by some of the most experienced men in the Party.

Mr. MacDonald declares that all that is best in the Liberal tradition, and in Nonconformity, has already passed to his Party, and if this is so, then we may expect to see the Labor Party growing steadily stronger at the expense of Liberalism until "the newt of 1900 has swallowed the whale." Such a decline, resulting in an



immense broadening of Labor's basis, and strengthening of its ranks, would probably be an excellent thing from the point of view of progressive Britain. But despite certain symptoms, and a noticeable depression behind the scenes in the higher ranks of the Liberal Party, it is by no means certain yet that the great mass of traditional Liberals will find the satisfaction for their aspirations within the disciplined ranks of Socialism. If one could answer that question it would be easier to forecast the immediate future of the Labor Party.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MACDONALD AND THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

**R**AMSAY MACDONALD'S attitude towards what Professor Zimmern has called the "third British Empire" can be indicated in a few words—he is anxious to hasten the coming of a fourth stage—when the word "Empire" will be heard no more and the control of the red spaces on the map will be vested in the inhabitants wherever possible, or accepted as a solemn trust on behalf of the native populations where, as in the African colonies, self-government is clearly not yet in sight.

In outlining Labor's earliest ideas on Empire development as expounded by Mr. MacDonald in 1907, and the policy to which he stands committed to-day, it is necessary to consider separately the future of the Dominions, and the future of the native territories under the British flag. The correct attitude towards the former is easy to define—it consists of keeping the ideal of "equal partnership" in the British Commonwealth clearly in view. More complex are the problems of the primitive peoples and mandated territories—race, religion, color, industry, health and education—which demand settlement. How would Ramsay MacDonald deal with them? What is the pattern he would weave out of this varied and contrasting material? The answer is, "Decide on your principle and your principle will show you the path ahead." In the case of our Colonies, the principle which MacDonald has preached consistently since entering the House of Commons is in all our relations with backward peoples to aim at preserving whatever is good in their communal life rather than to attempt to shape them to any preconceived pattern. Above all, to administer their territories in the interests of the inhabitants and not in accordance with whatever may be, for the moment, the commercial or national needs of Great Britain. Trusteeship, not Em-

pire, is Labor's motto in approaching the problems of our overseas possessions.

This conception of Empire responsibility would to-day be accepted by most progressive minds. Even the very word "Colonies," so beloved by the Chamberlain school of thought, has dropped into disuse since 1906 definitely closed the period of "Imperialist" policies.

This change of outlook, good or bad as it may prove for the future of the British nations, was a change in which Mr. MacDonald played a leading part.

Based primarily upon a democratic outlook which knows no frontiers, his advocacy of such ideas was both quickened and clarified as a result of his wide travels in the years following his election to Parliament in 1906. Labor, MacDonald had determined from the beginning, must speak with authority upon matters affecting the Greater Britain overseas; nobody more than he realized the danger which a parochial outlook would mean to a national political party.

During his first Empire tour in the autumn of that year, therefore, he visited Australia. He had already toured Canada and South Africa, and his knowledge of India followed an extended visit in 1909 and the resulting book *The Awakening of India* was sufficiently comprehensive for Mr. Asquith to appoint him to an important Government Inquiry into the Civil Services of that country a year later.

Supporting the view that "as Labor would be legislating for the Empire, they ought to know the needs of the Empire" at the Party Conference held in 1906, MacDonald pointed out that the Labor M.P.'s who were proposing to accompany him upon a visit to Australasia were "simply going to have a holiday and they considered the Colonies the most suitable places to go to."

"It will bring us into contact with places where very interesting industrial experiments are being carried on. It has been threatened that the whole Colonial weight will be thrown against the Labor movement. We want to get into personal touch with the Colonies, so that on Free

Trade or any other issue the weight shall not go against the Labor Party."

Upon his return from that tour, Mr. MacDonald outlined an Empire policy for Labor in a book which reveals his views at that time.<sup>1</sup>

Declaring that "Socialism is the next world movement," he outlines his Imperial creed in the following passage:

"Being historical, it does not quarrel with historical facts. It contents itself with explaining them, and with apportioning blame and praise amongst the people who molded them; but it does not seek to go back upon them when once they have passed beyond the stage of contemporary change—when once systems of government and of thought have adjusted themselves to events. The Labor Party, therefore, no more thinks of discussing whether the Stuarts should be restored to the throne than it does of debating whether we should break the Empire to pieces. But it approaches Imperial problems with the politics of the industrious classes as guide on the one hand, and the internationalism of its nature as guide on the other. If it feels the pride of race, it understands that other peoples can respond to the same thrill. Its Imperialism is therefore not of the aggressive or the bragging order; it does not believe in the subjection of other nationalities; it takes no pride in the government of 'other' peoples. To its subject-races it desires to occupy the position of friend; to its self-governing Imperial States it seeks to be an equal; to the world it asks to be regarded as a neighbor."

Regarding what are to-day the great self-governing Dominions within the British Commonwealth of Nations, MacDonald then wrote:

"The unity which we seek cannot be imposed. It must be an expression of a desire already existing, just as restrictive legislation to be successful must not be a yoke, but the measure of further liberty. It must come from within, not from without. That, we now assume. Our daughter States need not trouble to argue with us upon that point. Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, have as much right to

<sup>1</sup> *Labour and the Empire*. George Unwin, 1907.



an independent existence and development as has Great Britain. If they remain within the Empire it is of their own free will and for reasons which appeal to themselves; if they accept Imperial standards and recognize the responsibilities, as well as claim the privileges of State-hood within the British hegemony, again, it is to be of their own free will. When our people over the seas accept these assurances the preliminary difficulties to Imperial thinking will be overcome.

"No party has more opportunity for allaying the natural suspicion of the Colonies in this respect than the Labor Party. The political organizations of Labor and Socialism all the world over are in close relation with each other. In spite of many differences in their State policies, which have arisen owing to geographical and industrial difference, in spirit the Labor Parties within the Empire are the same and their representatives are received with fraternal greeting by all the other Labor Parties. The significance of the fact that in every state of Australia the Labor Party is either in office or is the regular Opposition, and that the Party is rapidly widening its horizon and is becoming conscious of the part which Labor Parties have to play in the world's politics, has been altogether lost sight of by those who still think, as Mr. Chamberlain seems to do, that the last word which our Imperial States will have to say upon this Imperial relationship is: 'If you interfere when we think you are wrong, it is intolerable; but it is not less intolerable when we think you are right.' To us of the Labor Party this language and thought are both antiquated. They describe a position which does not exist in our minds. The accusation of interference does not apply to us. We think of common agreement. The Imperial standard is not to be laid down by Downing Street, but by the self-governing States taking on their shoulders their Imperial burden. It is not the 'you'—the Motherland—who are to interfere, it is the 'we'—the Confederation of the Empire—who are to decide. But at the present moment there is not sufficient identity of interest between political organizations at home and in the Colonies, other than those of the Labor Parties, to provide the conditions from which the new confidence is to spring up. A friendly cooperation between the Labor Parties in the Empire seems to me, not to be all that is required, but an essential first step to a genuine Imperial unity."

Turning to the other end of the scale of development within the Empire—to the native races under the British flag—MacDon-

ald refuted the suggestion that "the more developed races have no right to demand an exchange of goods from the Tropics." "The world," he declared, "is the inheritance of all men. Tribes and nations have no right to peg off parts of the earth and separate them from the rest as though they had been withdrawn to the moon."

"But the right of the Temperate Zone populations to enjoy the products of the Tropics does not override the superior right of the Tropical peoples to be treated as human beings. The white nations which exploit the Tropics economically assume responsibility for the natives, and how to fulfil that responsibility is the kernel of the problem of dependency government. This responsibility, however, may be regarded from a worthier point of view than as a consequent of economic exploitation. A community may well claim that it has a duty imposed upon it to spread the blessings of its civilization over the earth. Morality has a universal sway, and by reason of its *imperium* the more developed nations are brought into a position of something like guardian and teacher of the less developed nations."

"That is the theory," declared Mr. MacDonald. What of the practise? Here he frames an indictment of Britain's native policy up to that time—a policy which instead of sending educational and moral agents to aid the development of backward peoples, had sent out exploiters. "They have begun by uprooting native civilizations, by destroying the economic expressions of these civilizations—such as tribal lands, by forcing the native mind into new grooves which the mind does not fit and never can fit."

MacDonald paid tribute to the enthusiasm and disinterested work of Britain's Colonial servants, but he could pay no tribute to the results. "In some places, with disgraceful ferocity, we have killed his (the native's) body; in others, with the very loftiest intentions, we have killed his soul."

"One of the most glaring faults of our Colonial Office is that it has no conscious concern in experimenting with native politics. We have the

most magnificent opportunities for studying the conditions of native life and the use we make of these opportunities is insignificant."

The remedy, in Ramsay MacDonald's view, was outlined in the following passage:

"Our fundamental mistake in native policy is that we regard the native as a Briton in the making. Even Radicals fall into that error when they assume that the end of our native administration must of necessity be the self-government of the people. The development of their own organization, not the imposing of the ends of our national life, should be the purpose of our government of dependencies. In some cases it ought to be the reestablishment of the rule of the chiefs; in others a restoration of a kind of semi-democracy in which the people are partly enfranchised or elect part of the governing authority. In every case the native should be protected from the blighting exploitation of white man's capitalism; obstacles should be placed in the way of, rather than encouragement given to, the break-up of his tribal economic system; his traditional methods of legal administration should not be supplanted by ours which he cannot be taught to respect and often not even understand; even his catalogue of crimes should not be made the same as ours because he cannot understand our notions of right and wrong; finally, the less we interfere with native administration the better. We require Residents more than Governors.

"Such a change is essential to the continuation of democracy at home. For, as long as we regard the native as some one whom *we* must rule, we are attempting the palpable impossibility of ruling democratically at home and despotically abroad. The result will be that our own democratic systems will crumble, eaten to the heart of their supports by the autocracy of our dependency rule. 'Free nations cannot govern subject provinces.'"

To complete this brief outline of what may be regarded as Labor's first Empire policy, some reference must be made to the manifold and complex problems of our Indian Empire.

These problems, as has been said, had been studied by MacDonald on the spot, and he was an expert upon them when he first entered the House of Commons. Any summary of his views would not do justice, because of the very complexity of the ques-

tions involved, to a matter which he had made the occasion of deep and prolonged study. An indication of the conclusions to which he had come can, however, be found in two passages from *The Awakening of India*, a book which those interested in this aspect of Labor's policy should study.

"On the whole I therefore regard the future as belonging to Nationalism. India will not arise all at once, and if we are wise the day when it goes so far as to threaten us with expulsion is so remote that we need hardly think of it at all. In this connection, one consideration must not be forgotten. Whilst the best and the most ardent minds will speak of India, political freedom will come first of all through provincial Home Rule. There is so much individuality in the Provinces that India would lose seriously if it were obliterated. That was another of the many colossal blunders of Lord Curzon. His mind ran on centralization; the genius of India needs decentralization for its expression. The general lines of our government are good if they were a little freer. Responsible government in the Provinces, a federation of the Provinces in an Indian Government—that seems to me to be the way India is to realize herself—is, in fact, realizing herself."

British trusteeship of India is accepted as the best and wisest course for India herself in the following further passage:

"Britain is the nurse of India. Deserted by her guardian, India would be the prey of disruptive elements within herself as well as the victim of her own too enthusiastic worshipers, to say nothing of what would happen to her from incursions from the outside. Coerced by her guardian, she will be an endless irritation and worry. Consulted by her guardian, and given wide liberty to govern herself in all her internal affairs, she may present many difficulties and create many fears, but that is the only way to abiding peace and to the fulfilment of our work in India."

How do these early thoughts upon Empire problems compare with the policy of the first Labor Government and with Ramsay MacDonald's views as expressed in recent years? Is the statement, so often heard, that Labor is "not interested in" or even definitely antagonistic to the British overseas nations true?



The records of Hansard show that MacDonald was among the first statesmen to foreshadow the need for the Imperial Conference which now meets periodically to exchange opinions upon all matters of common concern to the various self-governing nations of the British Commonwealth. Speaking in the House of Commons as long ago as February 6th, 1911, the leader of the Labor Party declared:

"I believe, after all, that the Union Jack and British history and British sentiment and British policy are something that the Dominions ought to establish themselves custodians of as well as ourselves, and that consequently they must bear with us as we shall certainly bear with them in making just and proper criticism on matters which are not local and which must concern the whole of the Empire wherever that Empire exists."

And on Empire Day, 1924, the first Labor Prime Minister of Great Britain sent out to the Empire overseas a message of goodwill from the Motherland as noble in its conception and its feeling as any words ever written in our language:

"We have listened to the greetings of the Commonwealth Premiers with great pleasure and keen interest, and we send them in return our thanks and greetings from the Homeland. The parent tree is still green and the sap of high endeavor still swells in its branches. In the generations that have gone we have launched our exploring ships upon many a venturesome voyage, and to-day our people, our institutions, our traditions, and our methods are to be found all over the earth. Our days of voyaging are not over. The world of mind and idea lies around us in unexplored tracts more vast by far than this earth was to our seamen, and the Commonwealth of Nations centering in this Motherland still hears the call to go out in an Elizabethan spirit of gallantry and dauntiness in search of liberty, justice and peace."

One need not agree with Mr. MacDonald upon all points to feel that it is unwise for Conservatives to talk as though they alone were the custodians of our Imperial greatness, when a Labor Prime Minister can express so lofty a conception of our ideals of

Empire, and the spirit which inspires its pioneers in the new realm of thought.

During the short term of the first Labor Government, Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues strove to bring the self-governing Dominions into closer relations with the Motherland: "We want to know each other's problems," he declared in a speech before the Empire Parliamentary Association. "They are not quite the same. There is a difference in tradition, and location, and circumstances, and when one goes to Australia, New Zealand or Canada, one picks up a sort of engrafted class of mentality, and unless we are in the closest personal contact with each other, with the best will and heart in the world, we tend to drift apart, misunderstandings arise, different angles are employed to approach the same problems.

"Therefore," he added, "if the Governments of the Commonwealth and Dominions of the Empire are to keep in harmonious contact with each other it can only be done by personal contact, by arrangements made for visits and return visits, and by the publication of information. There is no association that could do these things except the Empire Parliamentary Association. I hope it will flourish and perform its work in uniting us in the only way in which we can be united; in bonds of Empire centered in a great and dignified Motherland."

For a detailed statement of Ramsay MacDonald's views upon British Empire problems to-day we must turn to the official Labor program, which may be accepted as expressing his views.

"It is the policy of the Labor Party to take steps which would insure closer political and economic relationships between Great Britain, India and the self-governing Dominions overseas, and the other constituent communities of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It believes in the right of the Indian people to self-government and self-determination, and the policy of a Labor Government would be one of continuous cooperation with them with the object of establishing India at the earliest possible moment, and by her consent, as an equal partner with the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

After passages advocating closer personal contact between the various Governments of Britain and the Dominions, a survey of the land resources of the Empire, and a statement that "Migration and training schemes are part of the policy of the Labor Party," the program states the Labor view upon native problems in words which bear the impress of Mr. MacDonald's views of over twenty years before:

"The Labor Party views with grave concern the appalling evils produced by capitalist exploitation in certain of the tropical and sub-tropical parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It holds that the welfare of the indigenous races, their economic prosperity and their advancement in culture and civilization, must be the primary object of colonial administration, to which all other interests must be rigorously subordinated. It notes with satisfaction that, where that principle has been observed, primitive peoples have achieved, in a comparatively short time, results which decisively disprove the statement that they are incapable of social progress. It is determined that the fullest possible opportunities of similar progress shall be brought within their reach in all regions for whose government Great Britain is responsible.

"A Labor Government will make no compromise with policies which aim at accelerating the economic development of backward areas by methods which undermine the independence, the social institutions and the *morale* of their inhabitants, and which thus are injurious both to them, and, ultimately, to the working classes of Europe. It will use every means in its power to protect them in the occupation and enjoyment of their land, to prevent absolutely forced labor, whatever form it may assume, and to ensure that contracts between native workers and European employers are entered upon voluntarily and not under duress, that such contracts are subject to the approval of a public authority, and that they embody terms securing to the workers equitable conditions of life and enjoyment."

Writing on another aspect of the "trusteeship" question, after a visit to Palestine, he said:

"Our own policy is plain. We should regard ourselves as friends in the background, guarding against evil, applying negative commandments rather than positive ones, beginning good things always with

the cooperation of the people themselves, and less as government than as private and spontaneous effort, and guarding as much as possible against taking upon ourselves responsibility for a government that ought to become more and more self-government. British officials should be reduced to a minimum, and they should regard themselves mainly as advisers. . . . The two great obstacles in our way are: first of all, the official who comes with a purely military mind to his task, who thinks of a British Empire of subject peoples being ruled by Englishmen, whose ideas of efficiency are English and nothing else. This man overgoverns and makes a mess of things; and the other is the man of commercial interests, who thinks that his store is the Empire, and that his profits must be made sure of by British political control exercised by British officials, soldiers and police. He knows nothing of politics and cares less—except when he confuses economic materialistic advantage for himself with good government.”<sup>2</sup>

In those extracts we see the natural development of the views which Ramsay MacDonald expressed in 1907. Then he wrote: “The white nations which exploit the Tropics economically assume responsibility for the natives,” and “This responsibility may be regarded from a worthier point of view than as a consequent of economic exploitation.” To-day the responsibility then admitted has been faced and the solution stated in the above passage, which goes further in its declaration of native rights than any other statement of policy submitted to the electors of this country. Here, again, we see the patience of Mr. MacDonald; see the proof of his view that “time is on our side,” for those who admit the justice of Labor’s analysis of policy regarding the native races to-day number far more than was the case when he first laid down the position of “Guardian and teacher,” and not economic overlord, as the first principle of British colonial policy.

It may be said that theory is one thing and practise another. Not what MacDonald believes or says concerning the Empire, but what he does, is the test. Can a man who once dedicated a book to the group of “Little Englanders” of which he was a promi-

<sup>2</sup> *Forward*, March 18th, 1922.



nent member, be trusted to handle the many and complex problems arising from our trusteeship of wide territories and backward races?

Labor's first tenure of office in 1924 provides an answer to that question, for though those ten months were a period of relative quiescence in Imperial matters, one problem did arise—a problem which might have been expressly chosen to test the sincerity of MacDonald's protestations that Labor, equally with other parties, has the real interests of the British Commonwealth of Nations at heart. I refer to our relations with Egypt; and that country's demand to administer the Sudan in her own interests. Here was the opportunity for any one antagonistic to the solemn responsibilities of stewardship to abandon the Sudanese to the people who had formerly misruled them. What was Mr. MacDonald's attitude in a delicate situation?

Speaking at Port Talbot shortly after the resignation of his Government,<sup>3</sup> he reminded his audience that the Sudan had been administered jointly by Britain and Egypt since 1899.

"Egypt," he declared, "says: 'you and we will administer the Sudan,' but I found when I was in office that instead of Egypt helping me in my work in the Sudan, it was deliberately hampering it. Every Egyptian officer was tending to become a center of propaganda for the destruction of law and administration in the Sudan. Now that cannot go on."

He went on to liken the administration of the Sudan to a joint trusteeship, and said it was absolutely impossible for Britain to agree to Egypt treating the Sudan as though it were her own property, because it was not. If Egypt did not care to carry on the joint trusteeship the time would come sooner or later when we should have to say to Egypt: "Really, if you cannot help us you must go."

Continuing, MacDonald went to the crux of Labor's attitude to Empire problems in the following declaration: "I hope that Great Britain will report the whole circumstances to the League

<sup>3</sup> November 28th, 1924.

of Nations and ask for a mandate by virtue of which we will remain responsible for administration of the Sudan. Only in that way can we justify our position. A mandate from the League of Nations would put this country right with the outside world."

There may be arguments against handing over any responsibility for decisions affecting our Empire to the League of Nations. On that question opinions will differ. But Labor's bold stand against the inflated demands of the Egyptian Nationalists discount the suggestion that the Party has any affinity with the enemies of the Empire. The recent new proposals made to the Egyptian people, involving fresh concessions to the principle of Egyptian nationality, will, when examined, not necessitate any departure from that view.

Two other Imperial problems which have been afforded some prominence by the course of recent political events and upon which a word must be said, are: the fiscal question as it finds expression in Imperial Preference, and migration.

It is improbable that Ramsay MacDonald has ever felt the same enthusiasm in fighting for Free Trade as in advocating a program of slum clearance or propagating Socialism. During the 1923 Election campaign, he declared that the issue was not "Protection versus Free Trade," but "Protection versus the Labor Policy." So far as he is interested in the question, however, MacDonald is a Free Trader and Labor is a Free Trade Party. Despite pious hopes on the part of Conservatives that Labor will one day turn to tariffs, it is safe to say that as long as Labor remains of its present mind, and Philip Snowden remains Labor's nominee for the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, neither Protection nor Safeguarding will feature in the Party program.

Viewed from the Empire angle Mr. MacDonald is opposed to any attempt to strengthen by economic measures the bonds which bind the British sister-nations to the Motherland, as being destructive of its real moral and spiritual foundation.

In a newspaper interview after his return from a visit to Ceylon

in 1926, he outlined his views on Imperial Preference in these words:

"As soon as one talks with our friends who come from the Dominions one's mind is disabused at once of any idea that Imperial Preference guarantees to us permanently a market for our goods. Australia and the other parts of the Empire, starting on the assumption that Protection is a good policy, quite naturally and properly will do everything they can to increase their own production behind a tariff wall. And however high that wall may be against the foreigner, it will be kept sufficiently high against us to keep us out if Australian manufacturers wish it. I was present at an interesting discussion between a Yorkshire manufacturer and an Australian manufacturer, and in the course of a very few minutes that was made perfectly clear."<sup>4</sup>

Protesting against the policy of turning the Empire into "a matter of pounds, shillings and pence—profits and profiteering," MacDonald declared that "the history of the decline and fall of the British Empire, if ever it is written, will begin with the Toryism of our day and its pernicious political and economic beliefs."

It has been said that Labor is opposed to migration within the Empire, and so far as this statement means that British Labor is opposed to solving our unemployment problem by creating unemployment in the Dominions by the "dumping" of the workless in new lands, regardless of their fitness for land work or the preparations made for their reception, the statement is true.

Speaking in the House of Commons in 1922 on the various measures proposed to alleviate unemployment, the leader of the Labor Party explained his attitude to migration in these words:

"Emigration, we are told, is one solution. It was from this side of the House that the other day the suggestion was made that our population is now too large. If it be a result of the War that the economic position we have held in the world can be held by us no longer, if it be a result of the War that our peculiar position as a specialized productive country and world industrial power has gone, emigration must be faced, and will be faced. Yes, but it is a very extraordinary phe-

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, February 9th, 1926.



THE PRIME MINISTER ON HIS WAY TO MEET THE NEW HOUSE  
OF COMMONS FOR THE FIRST TIME





nomenon, and it casts a grave reflection upon all those assumptions that in principle and in system this country is governed as well as it possibly can be, and that no fundamental changes in that respect are necessary. But there is something more. It is also very extraordinary that a great many of those who have emigrated, and have gone abroad seeking new homes and fresh prosperity, have failed to find them and are now back in this country, registering at employment exchanges, with all their savings and all their protection against continued poverty gone, in a very much worse position than they were before they went."<sup>5</sup>

Now that members of other Parties possessing first-hand knowledge of the problem are agreed that migration must be reckoned at best a palliative, and not a cure, for the overcrowding and underemployment in Britain, Labor's attitude on the question, as expressed by Ramsay MacDonald, is no longer a "plank" in the platform of one Party, but a widely held view cutting across the usual political divisions.

"Emigration cannot cure, or even substantially alleviate, the British unemployment problem," declared MacDonald upon his return from a visit to Canada in September 1928.

Speaking of what he had seen, he said: "The scope for emigration to Canada is very great, and I am sure, as a result of close enquiry, that everything else being equal, Canada would prefer British settlers. But Canada wants them for specific purposes. The country is not an almshouse to which surplus population can go. Nor can bedrooms be found there to solve the problem of the overcrowding of Europe. Canada is a new country with natural resources requiring to be developed. It is therefore going to pick its immigrants, and it has a perfect right to do so."

When Labor was in office in 1924 it planned a family emigration scheme, and the migration of whole families on to the vacant lands of the Empire is still the policy which MacDonald favors. Such a scheme can only follow the clearing of land and the building of homesteads. It will therefore take time and cost money. But Labor, in close consultation with the Labor Parties

<sup>5</sup> Hansard, December 1st, 1922.

in the Dominions, believes that this considered and carefully regulated migration is the only method likely to safeguard the interests of the emigrant, prevent swelling the ranks of the workless in the cities and the reduction of the standard of life for Trade Unionists in the Dominions. Emigration, therefore, even under the most favorable conditions, offers opportunities only for those among our workless fit and willing to undertake work on the land.<sup>6</sup> And to get approved settlers established time is necessary. Referring to the uninhabited acres of the Canadian West, MacDonald has said: "The settlement of all this vacant land should be undertaken systematically—so many thousand families, or whatever the possible number might be, sent each year."

One more consideration must be examined to complete this outline of Ramsay MacDonald's views on the British Commonwealth of Nations. It concerns those Capitalists who, by regarding the Empire as an economic preserve of the British race, and by striving to maintain economic "zones of influence" over independent territories in their own national interests, endanger world peace.

"Persia, China and Asia Minor are divided into economic spheres of influence; the Tropics are annexed to this Power and that for commercial purposes. Thus national rivalry is maintained, national security is jeopardized, costs of government are swollen, conditions of war are created and all for the interests of private capitalists confessing to a creed which declares for peace and security.

"I am not one of those who reject the statement that trade is a concern of a nation. It is the concern of a nation far more than has yet been seen. I argue, however, that this concern directed by the interests of competitive private capital seeking its own profits first, and not at all as a national concern, makes for war and launches us upon colonial policies which are bound from generation to generation to challenge military appeals. Capitalism in its actual working defeats at every point the sound political rules for the conduct of trade."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In Canada, it has been estimated, one town worker is needed to supply the needs of every five men at work on the land.

<sup>7</sup> *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, by J. Ramsay MacDonald, p. 33. Cassell, 1921.

Again, Mr. MacDonald indicts the modern trend of Capitalism in the Tropics, and justifies Labor's policy as outlined in this chapter in the following passage:

"In modern production, the Tropics are a source of essential raw materials like vegetable oil, and mineral oil abounds where government is weak and civil order uncertain. This leads to territorial annexation, to the economic rivalry of great States, to the exclusion of unpopular ones, to armaments and to war. It also leads to politico-moral results almost as disastrous to a healthy State. It puts temptations in the way of civilized States to employ "natives" as tribute laborers, as has been proposed by our Empire Resources Development Committee, and thus to become demoralized by something akin to slave-owning. The next step will be that Capitalism, in its own interests, will establish extractive plants in these regions, use forced labor in them, and export the partly-finished products to go through the more technical final processes here. When that takes place, we approach the end of States, for wealth created after that fashion and brought in as tribute is a canker at the heart of peoples. All this happens not because community interests require such developments, but because the interests of Capitalists must extend their possessions and their conflicts, and must not only dominate the community by their trade combinations, but drag the political State into these foreign annexations and rivalries as well."<sup>8</sup>

If unrestricted Capitalism is not acceptable as a canon of conduct in Empire development, would Socialism be an improvement on it? The following passage from Mr. MacDonald's best known exposition of his creed may be taken as the starting-point of Labor opinion upon the British Commonwealth of Nations and its problems of to-day and to-morrow.

"The only possible or desirable form of Empire is one of self-governing States kept together by the most flexible bonds of historical cooperation and of common interest.

"So far from Socialism disrupting such a group of banded States, its principles compel it to strive to keep them together. A self-governing India in the fellowship of the British Commonwealth would have as much liberty as an India cut off into an independent State, and it would reduce the sources from which world conflicts might arise. The

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.



only question is: What is to be the spirit of that Commonwealth? If it is to be a military union of domination, no political wisdom can preserve it, because it itself would not be in accordance with political wisdom. If it is the forerunner and the beginning of a world federation of States, more complete in its unity than any League of Nations can be, political wisdom will guide it to its magnificent destiny. The spoils of past conquests can be made the foundations of a world Federation when democracy becomes the inheritor of the spoils. Nor is Socialism compelled, by being true to itself, to refuse responsibility for the weaker peoples known as the native races. Not only do they occupy lands the products of which are necessary for the enjoyment of other peoples and for world industry, but they themselves are human and come within the scope of our ideas of both justice and mercy. Capitalism regards them, as it regards white labor, as mere instruments for making profits, for the life and well-being of whom it has no responsibility. But whilst white labor can protect itself against capitalist materialism, native labor cannot. The communal economics of Socialism do protect the native, because these economics establish between those who enjoy products and those who supply them a responsible relationship. Only under a Socialist régime can the idea underlying the mandates supposed to be issued by the League of Nations be fully carried out, and the economic and industrial contacts which nature imposes upon the peoples of the highly developed and the primitive States be supplemented by political protection and tutelage. When the Socialist view of human inter-relationship and obligation becomes more widespread, the citizen of the mightier States will understand that the highest form in which unchallengeable power can be exercised is to do justice with tender consideration for those who have no redress if any State cares to do them wrong.”<sup>9</sup>

In that passage we hear the voice of the idealist, but a practical idealist, whose views have been shaped by travel and study of Empire problems at the closest range. Ramsay MacDonald sees the British Commonwealth of Nations as a moral responsibility first, and an economic opportunity only so far as the interests of trade do not conflict with the interests of humanity. His vision, inspired by dreams of a Socialist Utopia with its outposts far-

<sup>9</sup> *Socialism: Critical and Constructive*, pp. 251-53.

flung to East and West, sees a British Commonwealth in which force plays no part, but in which all the States under the Union Jack are united in common laws, language, aims and ideals, to be a power for peace in the world and a "sure shield" to guard the backward races under its protection against aggression, and to guide their feet in the path of progress.

Such is Labor's conception of the British Empire, as visualized by Ramsay MacDonald. It will be said that this picture differs little from the Dominion and Colonial policies of the other Parties. Labor retorts that the Capitalist may pay lip-service to this view of Empire development, but his own interests will prevent a really enlightened native policy being pursued, and his materialism will predestine his halting attempts at disinterested government to failure. History will provide the answer to that. The present century has already seen one set of phrases discarded. "Kiplingese" is as out of date as the dodo. More important, the principles underlying them are rapidly being dispersed. The Amritsar massacre, which would have passed without comment thirty years ago, caused a crisis in the House of Commons, and cut short the career of the officer responsible for that fatal error of judgment.

Whatever the course of development of the British Commonwealth of Nations, there is nothing to fear from the putting into practise of MacDonald's policy. For just as surely as ours will be the last world-empire to arise in history before cooperation displaced conquest, so in the future any policy of repression or monopoly in the management of subject-races must invoke the wrath of organized world-opinion.

Ramsay MacDonald's phrase: "The world is the inheritance of all men," is likely to be the guiding principle of Colonial government for many years to come. On this point, at least, Labor expresses the views of the civilized world.

## CHAPTER XIV

### INTERNATIONALISM

**R**AMSAY MACDONALD was born with the gift of thinking internationally. From his early school days in Lossiemouth to that great moment of his career in Geneva in 1924, when he spoke to the whole world in the accents of constructive peace, there would appear to be a great gulf in time and in opportunity. Yet the development seems to be natural enough when the facts of his life and work are more closely examined. Remember that the books of Hugh Miller, the Scottish geologist, had been among his earliest influences, mingling, no doubt, with the significant phrases of the Shorter Catechism that formed no small part of the elementary education of Scottish youth.

Thus, in early days, the receptive mind of the young MacDonald held views of "man's chief end" that had been molded by conceptions of geologic time, and were not in any way limited by mere national circumstances.

Keen for knowledge, he had a mind which was able to absorb it and grow with it. His mental frontiers were constantly widening. Thus the pride of the "Lossie loon" developed into the characteristic fervor of the Scotsman, and thence to a full appreciation of British citizenship and all the responsibility it involved.

Throughout all the years he has held devotedly to his nationalism, recognizing, cultivating and nurturing all the phases of Scottish character and Scottish life that have given the Scot so distinctive a place in the world. With every Scotsman, he gives unstinted devotion to Robert Burns and the influence of his verse. He has confessed to keeping two kinds of bed book in regular use—one the works of Sir Walter Scott, the other *The English Essayists*. He knows his native Highlands better than most, and has found no joy in all the world to excel the high spirits

their intimacy inspires. Regarding one of his many tramps among the Grampians he has said:

"The man who has never spent a night in a lonely place amidst wind and rain knows not what life is. You cannot defy man till you have defied the elements, and then become friendly with them, and I know no spot where you can more appropriately challenge wind and rain and cloud than on Ben Macdhui."

In all the corners of the world he has ached for the old familiar heights, and his cares lie lightest upon him when he finds refuge in his Highland home: "The hills beyond Pentland, the lands beyond Forth."

MacDonald's old comrade, Keir Hardie, was a kindred spirit in this fine nationalism, though it was the Lowland charms sung by Burns and Allan Ramsay that haunted the older man and lured his wandering feet homeward towards rest and quiet.

London life brought the wider world of men and affairs into his ken, and in the earlier Socialist days he mingled with men and women of international outlook and met many who had found on English shores a safe refuge from the tyranny of Continental despotisms.

An International Communist League had been founded in London in 1847, and under its auspices Karl Marx and Frederick Engels had issued the famous Communist Manifesto. But this attempt to form an International Center collapsed in 1852, and it was ten years later that the united efforts of English Trade Unionists and a number of delegates from foreign Socialist Parties and other working-class bodies inaugurated the International Working Man's Association. This, too, was fostered by Marx, but after a somewhat uncertain and ineffective existence it gave way under the stresses of the Franco-German War in 1872.

The body now known in history as the Second International came into being in Paris in 1889—the centenary year of the French Revolution—and by dint of dogged effort on the part of a very few men and women helped to infuse the international spirit in the ranks of the growing Socialist organizations through-



out Europe. It commanded the aid of Germans like Bebel, the elder Liebknecht, Kautsky, and Bernstein, when they were contesting the iron wills of both Bismarck and the older, and later the younger, German Emperor. Among its associates before the war was Herman Müller, once Secretary of the German Democratic Party, and now Chancellor of the Reich. Jean Jaurès was the dominant French figure in its counsels, who fell a martyr to his international associations at the hands of a hired assassin in Paris in 1914, and following him came his young disciple, Albert Thomas, now the Director of the International Labor Office under the League of Nations, at Geneva. Along with these and others from the smaller European countries were numerous Russians, including Lenin, Tchernoff, Axelrod, Roubanovitch, Tchaikovsky, all exiles from the Tzarist Siberia and all working quietly, unceasingly, devotedly, for the political freedom of their own homeland. It is worth noting that the creation of Bolshevism, as opposed to Menshevism, arose from differences among these and other Russian Internationalists, who split into two different groups with different ideas as to the methods by which Russian freedom was to be secured.

The International had its headquarters in the *Maison du Peuple*, in Brussels, and in Camille Huysmans, a young professor of languages, possessed an uncommonly capable and attractive Secretary. It held Congresses in various capital cities, London, 1896; Paris, 1900; Amsterdam, 1904; Stuttgart, 1907; Copenhagen, 1910; Basel, 1912; and preparations were in hand for a Congress to be held in Vienna in 1914 when the war broke over Europe. Various Bulletins and other documents were issued from time to time in three languages—English, French, and German, in which general political information gleaned from all the various affiliated Parties was the subject of exchange and discussion.

The earlier English Socialist bodies—the Social Democratic Federation, the Independent Labor Party, and the Fabian Society—all found their place in the Second International, though they differed profoundly in their fundamental conceptions.

Through his association with the Independent Labor Party, MacDonald came, with Keir Hardie, Bruce Glasier, H. M. Hyndman and others, into active contact with men and women who were carrying on Socialist work in other lands. As Secretary of the newly-formed Labor Representation Committee, with his colleagues, he sought to bring that body also into affiliation with the International as the fullest expression of the politically organized workers of Great Britain. There was much opposition to this proposal from Hyndman and the S.D.F. section, but ultimately the wider view prevailed, and from 1905 onward the L.R.C., and later the Labor Party, became one of the most active bodies in the International, and MacDonald one of its most prominent and influential members. For many years he served upon the Bureau that acted as the Executive of the International and, apart from its immediate business transacted at meetings in various European capitals, he gained first-hand knowledge of foreign Movements and the Socialist view on Continental politics from the men and women who were making history in their own countries, just as he himself was shaping events in Britain.

There is a certain pathos in looking back upon the efforts of the Second International prior to 1914. Certain it is that if the various men who were afterwards destined to wield the powers of statesmanship in Europe had held the reins of Government in their respective countries before that great catastrophe, national differences could and would have been adjusted without bloodshed. Ramsay MacDonald and his friends, however, were all ahead of their time, and war had to bring democratic power by way of revolution in Central Europe before their political gifts were recognized by their countrymen.

How strenuously Mr. MacDonald sought for International Peace the records of Parliamentary debates and of innumerable journals and newspapers give full evidence.

In 1910, after the Copenhagen Congress of the International, he urged:

"The world lies at the feet of Labor, disorganized, split into jealous nations, ruled by force, rushing headlong to a crashing war. A lead for organization, for peace, for cooperation is required, and the eyes of all men who are seeing anything at all are turned upon organized Labor, expecting it to act. Will a David come from the camp, armed with a sling but powerful in the might of the things of righteousness, to smite the boasting and mischievous Philistines? Ah! Would the workers but see. They are being called to write the greatest and grandest of all chapters in human history."

Among other endeavors to link the working-class movements of Britain and Germany when tension was at its patriotic height were tours of members of the Parliamentary Labor Party and their families and friends in 1909 and 1912. Everywhere the Burgomasters and Municipal authorities greeted these pilgrimages of peace and interchanges of thought, opinions and hopes for harmony were made with all sections of German civic life.

MacDonald concluded the first tour by a notable speech in the Reichstag at a gathering presided over by Bethmann Hollweg, then the German Chancellor. What thoughts of the carnage that had been inflicted upon unhappy Europe in the interval must have passed through his mind when in 1928 he again accepted an invitation to speak before the German Parliament and again brought the prospect of a united Europe before his audience!

Much was made of MacDonald's reference during the war to "his German friends," and most of the comment was uninformed. For years he had mingled with men who had fought Imperialism and Junkerdom in their own native Germany. Many had broken bread at his own table during their years of exile in London, and they, and many others he knew, were as concerned as he was with the needs of European Peace. In all countries Internationalists saw the war as a civil war for which the mass of combatant workers had no responsibility, but suffered the same hardships and unspeakable experiences on all its fronts. Camille Huysmans sought to preserve contact with all sections of the International and suffered in turn the suspicions and veiled hostilities

of them all. Unsuccessful attempts were made to arrange a Congress just before the Armistice was declared and, among other unpleasant memories in his life, MacDonald has the recollection of the refusal of the members of the Seamen's Union to man the vessel upon which he proposed to go to Stockholm to attend the International.

The Socialists of the Allied countries, however, went to great pains to elaborate a series of War Aims, charged with common-sense and democratic possibilities. Again they were well before their day, and MacDonald's hope for a rational peace at Versailles went down in the General Election of 1918 before the hectic demands to "Hang the Kaiser," and "Make Germany Pay."

Early in 1919 the coming of Peace gave the erstwhile conflicting Socialists the opportunity of meeting in Berne, where they hammered out some of their war differences and reestablished the international instrument that had failed to function from the moment war credits had been voted by the German Socialists in 1914 under fear of the Russian onset. Mr. MacDonald took his share of the work of reconciliation, and at home, in England, recovered lost ground as the tide of war receded and the reactions following the publication of the Secret Treaties brought all the allied democracies to a surer understanding.

Previous pages have indicated MacDonald's journeyings about the world. As a young Fabian he lectured in various cities in the United States, and there, as elsewhere in later life, made personal acquaintance with kindred spirits and gained knowledge which served him greatly both at the moment and afterwards when faced with political problems of international significance.

He has had the advantage of visiting Canada at different and distant dates. First with his wife on their honeymoon journey in 1896, again in 1906 when they crossed the Continent as the first stage of their trip round the world, and a third time when, in 1928, he took the three daughters of that happy union over the old trail that he had covered with their mother. Each time he was impressed, as all thoughtful minds must be impressed, with the immense possibilities that Canada presents to the right type of



emigrant. One of his most characteristic narratives described an incident in his later Canadian visit. It is reprinted as an Appendix, and serves to depict the glow of the Scots among the "exiles from their father's land."<sup>1</sup>

"When sad hearts over seas come leaping  
To the Highlands and the Lowlands of their home."

In 1902, as recorded elsewhere, he went, with his wife, through the ravaged Dutch Republics after the South African War. By careful records, suitably documented and illustrated by photographs of his own taking, light was shed on the farm-burning policy that had been dictated by the military needs of the British Army and the cruelties that had followed in its train. Again, personal contact with the defeated Dutch leaders, Botha, Merri-man, Smuts, and others, helped to pave the way, on his return to London, for better understandings, and later assisted to the brave statesmanship that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman displayed in granting full Dominion status to a united South Africa. By the time Botha visited London in 1910 he was the honored Premier of South Africa, and MacDonald was then the Leader of the Parliamentary forces also destined to rule. Thus has MacDonald witnessed the twist of fortune in other lives and in other lands than his own, and so has learnt the deep lesson history teaches the faithful, the upright, and the diligent.

His visit to Australia and New Zealand in 1906 was fruitful in many ways. The Commonwealth had been an experimental seed-plot for Labor legislation for many years, and since 1891 Labor Parties, built on a British Trade Union basis for the most part, had been created and were active in all the various States. Labor was also a growing political force in the Commonwealth as a Federal Party, and already in 1904 had been responsible for a Labor Cabinet, headed by J. C. Watson, a working compositor, as Premier. Both MacDonald and his wife had been keen students of the Factory Acts, particularly in their application to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix L.

women's working conditions. They amassed a wealth of information on industrial law, and again made countless friendships among the many Trade Union and Labor leaders with whom they came into contact. Many of these visited their London home in later years, as State Premiers and members of the Commonwealth Parliament, as proud of their development and contribution to the advancement of the workers of Australia as was MacDonald himself of the achievements of the British Labor Party.

Having seen his kinsmen abroad in the new lands seeking to work out their economic and social salvation on democratic lines, with Mrs. MacDonald he was impelled to come into closer acquaintance with the peoples and problems of India. He wrote the story of their journeying through that great land in 1909, in letters to the *Daily Chronicle*, afterwards, with additional chapters on the position of Indian women by Mrs. MacDonald, published in volume form, entitled *The Awakening of India*—a very valuable introduction, already referred to, for the general reader to the most perplexing political problem the British Parliament and public have to face.

At the moment of Mr. MacDonald's second accession to the Premiership, Indian questions are demanding close and serious attention, and his reflections on the last day he spent in Calcutta at the conclusion of his first visit to the Dependency are of more than significant interest now:

"I saw the pageantry of India, its gilded past, its patient peasant toiling till the sun goes down, its newly educated sons, subtle, resentful, proud, cherishing memories and hopes in their hearts. The smoke clouds of Bombay, the bustle of Calcutta, the ruined cities of the Ganges plains, the crowded temples and ghats of Benares, passed through my mind. Simla with its vanities both of force and frivolity, the good men of my own people who strive to do righteously, the mistaken men who walk in the darkness which will never lift from their honest minds, came up too. And it seemed to me as though the procession of the old, of India herself, were to last through the ages, whilst our dominion was to pass as the shuttle through the warp, as a lightning

flash from cloud to earth. . . . The impulses of Indian life will go on. They will show themselves in Science, in Art, in Literature, in Politics—in Agitation. We can welcome them, or we can try to retard them and grudge them every triumph. If we are wise, we shall do the former. We can then help India and win her gratitude and friendship. When she is rich, as she will be, she will remember the friend of her poverty. When she is honored for her own sake, as she will be, she will remember the patron of her obscurity. But we cannot keep her back. Her Destiny is fixed above our will, and we had better recognize it and bow to the Inevitable."

There has been a good deal of misrepresentation with regard to MacDonald's personal view on Communism. The popular Press took little account of international gatherings before the war, and few were aware of, much less interested in, the disputes regarding democracy as against revolutionary methods that were dividing the Socialists of Europe into conflicting camps. MacDonald had engaged in these disputes and had written at length in defense of Parliamentaryism. The arguments ran highest among the Russians, however. Many people, even to-day, fail to realize that there were two Revolutions in Russia. The first, that led by Kerensky, a Menshevik Democrat, was impelled by the massacre of the flower of Russia's manhood along with the starvation of its peasantry, and aimed at establishing a Russian Parliamentary system on Western European lines. That was the Revolution hailed by British Socialists and Radicals, MacDonald amongst them. It was the Allied attempt, with Kerensky's unwilling aid, to whip the unarmed and starving Russian army to further offensives against Germany that led to his summary displacement by Lenin, his colleague Trotsky, and others of the Third, or Communist, International. Lenin realized that the only possible chance of a Russian recovery was an immediate peace. There was no occasion for surprise in this development, and many, including MacDonald, who quite understood the secret of Lenin's power and popularity in Russia, disagreed fundamentally with his philosophy as he and his colleagues sought to apply it to other nations.

As MacDonald continually urged, the British Democracy had the power of government in its own hands, and that being so, there was no case for catastrophic upheavals in this country. It was on these grounds that he fought with all his vigor against the attempt by the tiny group of British Communists to influence the Labor Party, first by seeking to secure a "United Front" by direct affiliation, and when that tactic had failed, by organizing cliques and "Left Wing" coteries among the rank and file of the Party.

One more quotation revealing Mr. MacDonald's mind on this question may not be out of place. Writing in the *Socialist Review*, in 1920, he declared:

"The real Third International stands as the embodiment of a belief in force and armed revolution as the one universal means of attaining to Socialism."

"The Third International is the product of two things—Russian conditions and a dogmatic logic which spins policy from fancied necessity. The grand *coup d'etat* in Russia and its successful defiance of the whole of armed and financial Europe have properly roused the enthusiasm of democrats all over the world and have particularly affected the minds of those who have entered the Socialist Movements since 1914. They find it impossible to pay tribute to the courage and strength of will of the Russian leaders and to demand that European reaction and spitefulness shall let them alone, without also supporting the Moscow International. I do the first two, but decline to do the third."

" . . . the objection I have taken to the Third International is its domineering methods which ally it with theological fanaticism. It is metaphysical in its spirit and not scientific. It is to impose upon the National Parties a philosophy, a method, a shibboleth, and a purge."

In a word, MacDonald's historic sense holds the balance of his mind. His continued interest in the Cromwellian Revolution in this country, and the gradual but certain broadening of our political institutions, give point to his arguments for democratic rights.

A visit to Georgia in 1920 gave great satisfaction to MacDonald, as he found there valiant attempts were being made by a released Democracy to face the political and economic problems



imposed by a sudden return to peace by way of revolution. When, soon after his return to England, he learned of the invasion of Georgia by Bolshevik armies, directed from Moscow, he found confirmation of all his opposition to Communist expansion by armed force.

Other visits paid at odd times to Turkey, to Palestine, to Egypt, and to Ceylon have all helped to ripen an experience of world affairs that is to-day unrivaled in British public life.

It is notorious that MacDonald was opposed to the path of secret diplomacy that led to the World War, and that with other Socialists and Radicals he suspected the activities of the armament manufacturers of the leading nations of Europe. He held that there were forces making for war elsewhere than in the Central Empires. He knew that Lord Fisher, when First Lord of the Admiralty, had urged upon King Edward VII that "the British Fleet should 'Copenhagen' the German Fleet at Kiel, *à la* Nelson," and that he "lamented that we possessed neither a Pitt nor a Bismarck to give the order."

"It seemed to me," said Lord Fisher, "simply a sagacious act on England's part to seize the German Fleet when it was so very easy of accomplishment, in the manner I sketched out to His Majesty, and probably without bloodshed."<sup>2</sup>

It was the knowledge of the existence of this sort of mentality in high responsible quarters that impelled Mr. MacDonald to appeal to the masses to recognize their common interest in peace.

The late Lord Morley shared an intimate friendship with MacDonald, and early in their acquaintance indicated to a political colleague that MacDonald had the "Front Bench mind." That was true enough, as the House of Commons discovered when he was reelected the Leader of the Opposition in 1922, and when he emphasized the view from the Treasury Box as Prime Minister in 1924. From that vantage-ground he became a voice, a conscience for all thinking men whose souls longed for international peace, and now, in 1929, he returns once more, strengthened in his faith, more ardent than ever in his efforts to bring

<sup>2</sup> Lord Fisher's *Memories* (p. 19). Hodder & Stoughton, 1921. 21/-.



THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN "GET TOGETHER" TO BEGIN AFRESH THE WORK FOR WORLD PEACE AND DISARMAMENT. THE RT. HON. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P. AND GENERAL DAVES, U. S. AMBASSADOR AT THE COURT OF ST. JAMES, PHOTOGRAPHED (WITH MISS ISHBEL MACDONALD) AT THE HISTORIC MEETING IN SCOTLAND



the nations of the world into a secure and trustful cooperation. It is a remarkable tribute to his influence that he has risen from the depths of obloquy to the heights of world-wide statesmanship by sheer fidelity to the fundamental principles he has continually sought to promote both nationally and internationally.



## CHAPTER XV

### MACDONALD THE MAN

TO understand Ramsay MacDonald and the ideals which he has advocated with such forceful consistency for the past thirty-six years, it is necessary to go back to the days when he was called a "Lossie loon."

For MacDonald is a true-born Scot, with the somber faith, the dour determination, and the fighting spirit of his forebears. These are fine qualities, and had he been born an Englishman he would have found more to understand both him and them; had he been born a Welchman, with the fire and ready eloquence of that race, he would have found more to idolize him. But he is the descendant of Highlanders—aloof, reserved, inclined to obstinacy and intolerance—and this accounts for the fact that there are few in this country who can give him the complete appreciation to which, as one of the greatest of warriors for an ideal, he is entitled.

The inward and invisible life of a statesman is rarely assessed at its true value during his lifetime; nor can the public be blamed for their misunderstanding of a man who has been charged with aloofness even by some of those who know him best.

"Every friend of Mr. MacDonald's must at some time or another have met this unseeing eye; experienced the chill of going into his room (on invitation—there are only two people known to have made a practise of walking in unexpected and unasked) and being looked at, if looked at at all, as though not there."<sup>1</sup>

This is the estimate of a friend and an avowed admirer; there are many others in whom the picture would evoke a reminiscent smile. To be received as a deputation would be received, to be talked "at" rather than "to" or "with," to be given judgments for explanations—such a judicial atmosphere is momentarily apt

<sup>1</sup> "Iconoclast," in *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (1923-25).

to freeze the realization of the fact that a great statesman, tired and overworked, would pour out without stint his time and brain and cooperation if by doing so he could help by even the merest fragment of fuller apprehension the causes for which he has always stood.

Yet, although it is true that MacDonald has never been one to open his heart without reserve, he is a good friend of deep sympathies and warm affection, and one, moreover, whose friendship can be counted upon to endure. The visitors to his old home in Lincoln's Inn Fields were among the first to receive invitations to the social gatherings he gave when he reached Downing Street. And at no time in an overcrowded life has he been too busy for countless small kindnesses towards simple folk who would freely and cheerfully confess themselves nonentities.

In a man who has been accused of impatience, it is curious to find a continual dwelling upon the need for the opposite characteristic.

"I am one of those quiet sort of people," he declared recently, "one of those coral insects which build, build, and build, and nobody seems to know that they are building; but one day, lo and behold! the work they have done comes up above water, and every one knows, without talking, without boasting, without highfalutin' language, that the work has been done, and that is what we have got to do with the Labor Movement." Again and again do we hear the sounding of this deep, steady note. He has stripped his faith of all time-limits, and this enables him to work for the coming generations as joyfully and as confidently as for the day after to-morrow. Every great task he sees in the light of neither success nor rebuff, but as one more step along "the pilgrim road, which, mounting up over the hills and beyond the horizon, winds upwards towards the ideal."

This is the voice of the reformer, and we are not surprised to hear it lifted in praise of another man of kindred spirit—Oliver Cromwell. In the portrait gallery at Chequers, those paintings of the Protector are the ones which he is never tired of displaying.

Both in their different ages the masters of violence, both of them realize its limits. "What we gain in a free way is better than twice so much in a forced, and will be more truly ours and our posterities'. . . . I do not know that force is to be used except we cannot get what is for the good of the kingdom without force."

Those words, written by the victor of Naseby, might have been taken from one of MacDonald's speeches of to-day. Why use the claymore when there is nothing that cannot be gained through the vote?

Too, goals struck for too suddenly, reached too rapidly, are apt to bring as swift a reaction in their wake. Evolution, not revolution, is the law of Nature, and Ramsay MacDonald's greatest service to his Party—and also to his country—is that he has gathered up the smoldering injustices of our social system and from them fashioned the most moderate Socialist creed in the world. It may be that even the policy of "gradualness" to which he stands committed, and which, given a majority, he would certainly proceed to set in motion without any prodding from the Left Wing of his Party, would prove too severe a break for the delicately-balanced structure of a modern industrial State. Its opponents declare that Socialism in practise would lead to dear money, an increase in production costs, a decrease in exports, and more unemployment. Whatever the evidence for or against the remolding of our social fabric, it cannot be doubted that but for MacDonald the declared policy of the British Labor Party would have been far nearer to syndicalism, to "direct action," to root-and-branch reform, than it is to-day.

It is he who has chosen the most difficult task—to dictate the limited objective. He has chosen the battlefield, planned the campaign and unfurled, amid the plaudits of followers, subdued to wisdom, the banner bearing the words "Socialism by Instalments." It took a Highlander to create a mighty force, sound the advance, and then with his back to the wall, say: "Thus far and no further!"

Those who are fond of declaring that he is influenced against his own judgment by the extremists on the Left, are apt to forget

that they are discussing a man of the race which of all the people on earth is the least amenable to advice or to threats, once a decision has been made.

No temperament or character alone, however, could account for MacDonald's hold upon his Party. Wherein lies his power? the cause for the undoubted pride of his democratic followers in their autocratic leader?

His strength is manifold: it is compacted of intellect, sincerity, tenacity, energy and self-control.

His intellectual achievements are obvious. No British Prime Minister of recent years has traveled so widely or amassed so deep a knowledge of the world of rulers. He is that rare combination—a practical scholar who shines as a man of action.

His sincerity is acknowledged—a little grudgingly perhaps—by the most bitter of his opponents. He has no time for flattery and he has little patience for the methods of the demagogue. More than any other statesman of our generation, he has remembered that politics should bear some relation to our ideals and not only to our material interests.

"Let the reader be assured that Ramsay MacDonald's statesmanship will be an effort to put the Christian religion into practice," wrote "The Gentleman with a Duster" shortly after MacDonald became Prime Minister in 1924. "It will be that and nothing else. No greater mistake can be made by his opponents than to attack him as a fanatic of 'class hatred' or as a dogmatist of Socialist economies. Attacked on those grounds he will strike back with shattering effect."

The war must have provided the hardest, the bitterest test of his tenacity. His loyalty to what he believed to be the truth left him with an insignificant minority on his side. Almost every man's heart was hardened against him, those of his colleagues among them; and those who met him during that time say that he was always sad. But the after-years brought with them all the disillusioning results of a bloody struggle, all the reactions from a time when both country and men had perforce to be unbalanced, and all the problems of peace. And with them Mac-



Donald "came back"—testimony to the respect which all men feel for the fighter whose head is "bloody, but unbowed," the remembrance of his attitude only serving to remind men that his is a sincerity which can go through the furnace and come out hardened and purified, not softened or clouded.

I remember talking to a working man of definitely Communist views during the election of 1924, when MacDonald was asking the country to confirm his Government in office. The man expressed a strong hope that we should see him back with a majority, whereupon I pointed out that MacDonald was opposed to everything which as a Communist my acquaintance regarded as the true gospel of Labor.

"Maybe," he retorted, "but you know where you are with him. He's as straight as a gun-barrel."

His personal loyalties are equally unflinching. When all the world knew that his own staff at the Foreign Office had left him in ignorance for days regarding the Zinovieff letter and then blundered by publishing it before satisfying him as to its authenticity, he declared without hesitation that they had been correct in all that they had done—a courageous announcement which he knew must contribute materially to his embarrassments.

Most men of MacDonald's temperament would hardly shine on the platform, and yet it is there, surprisingly enough, that he forgets his reticence, his reserve, and stands forth as a born leader of men. Like the old Hebrew prophets, he rises up and thunders his denunciations, clothed with power, eloquence, dignity and responsibility. His tall spare figure neither halts nor grows weary, and it has been written that "he speaks as though dreaming and carried away by the strength of his imagination."

There ends all the emotional appeal that he deigns to use. Other orators of the day are prone to stagecraft, to capture the imagination by imagery, the goodwill of the audience by wit. But MacDonald disdains to make them laugh: he wants them to think. His appeal is to the reason—even on the eve of an election! The heckler whom others turn to their own advantage,

MacDonald will dismiss with an impatient, pitying remark; he is beneath contempt.

When MacDonald set forth on his election tour of 1924, he was accompanied by Mr. H. W. Nevinson, who gave the world this pen-picture of him:

"Apparently there is something irresistible in the man himself. He has that power which Goethe was the first to call 'personality.' I cannot define the origin of that power. One may call it 'quality': one may call it 'significance.' It is partly physical. Look along the front row of any platform where he is, and when your eyes reach him you will say at once, 'There's the man!' There is the singularly handsome head, the tall and active frame; the voice of wide and powerful range, sometimes wearied on this journey after the fifty speeches or more, most of them in the open air, but a voice always responding to the compelling spirit within that seemed to rise to new life at the sight of every new audience: and the larger the audience the more inspiring was the life.

"All these enviable qualities contribute to the power of 'personality.' But something more is needed, and I hardly know how to describe it. The trained intellect is there, the record of hard, intellectual toil, the wide and accurate knowledge of the world and its problems, whether Indian or European. There is also the keen and cultivated appreciation of beauty, whether of nature or of art. But as the highest gift of his 'personality' I think I should put the rare and beautiful power of sympathetic imagination—that gift of mental vision which can make the sorrows and labors and joys of other men and women his very own."

A glimpse of the connection between Ramsay MacDonald's philosophy and political theories is afforded by a small passage from an address which he gave on "Art in Everyday Life." "You will never get back again to happy work until the spirit of the artist is in you," he declared. "What we want is an intellectual and spiritual examination of our economic civilization to see what is material and mechanical and what is free and not subject to formula. The greatest of our problems is how to keep individuality free. The only way you can solve that problem is to make up your mind as to what part of life is to be organized in

order that the other part may be free. The talk about organization being opposed to freedom is perfectly absurd. There is no such antithesis. Freedom depends on organization and a condition of freedom is obedience."

Over and over again you will find speeches in praise of work, and the conception of the spirit which should animate the proud workman, as he has expressed it, is the ideal which has more than once broken his body and left his spirit untouched.

"My idea of a workman is a man who regards his work with exactly the same affection as he regards his wife. He sees in it something that is lovely, something that is attractive, something that gives his heart and soul the great satisfaction of being in affectionate relation with him."

We find that same love of achievement for its own sake revealed in his speech at a dinner which was given to him in 1925, "in recognition of his high personal and political character and his great gifts as a writer and a speaker."

Replying to Mr. T. P. O'Connor, the "Father" of the House of Commons, who had proposed his health, MacDonald said: "One hears a great deal about the burdens of office and so on. It is all nonsense. It is about time that we faced the real facts. Office has no real burden to the man who enjoys public life. Office is all compensation; work abundantly, yes—twenty-five hours out of the twenty-four. That is not a burden, it is a delight, a pleasure. It is a great satisfaction to feel that during the brief period of three-score years and ten which might be lived in this life, every minute of it has passed with golden results."

This is a philosophy which Ramsay MacDonald has practised wholeheartedly, not only in office, but elsewhere, for he is a "man of parts" who could have worn with equal impressiveness the dress of the scholar, the teacher, the writer. Not for nothing did he go through the journalistic mill with a pencil and a notebook tacked to his pockets. The habit has persisted, an invaluable habit, from his point of view and the public's, for a close-tongued man will betray his finer feelings on paper when he might be too shy to disclose them elsewhere. He was once advised by Thomas





LABOR'S SECOND CABINET—THE MEN, AND ONE WOMAN, WHO ARE RULING  
BRITAIN TO-DAY

(Left to right, seated) J. R. Clynes, Lord Parmoor, J. H. Thomas, Philip Snowden, J. Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, Lord Passfield, Lord Sankey, Wedgwood Benn. (Standing) George Lansbury, A. V. Alexander, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Margaret Bondfield, Lord Thomson, Thomas Shaw, Arthur Greenwood, Noel Buxton, William Graham and William Adamson





Hardy to forsake the world of politics for that of literature; but he has managed to become a great light in the one without bidding farewell to the other. Some of his journalism is transient, but it is clear with sincerity, not without a certain solid grace and dignity, and the obvious product of a mind keenly sensitive to beauty. The life of Knox, which it is his ambition to write, would be more interesting from his pen.

Some of his non-political writings may be found in *Wanderings and Excursions*,<sup>2</sup> but they will not, I venture to suggest, endure as long as his interpretations of his own creed. When his own active part has come to an end, the words in which he has analyzed the Socialist ideal will still be working for him, interesting and influencing men and women.

Yet these gifts of his must perforce remain the occupation of leisure hours, for if there is anything certain in politics, it is that Ramsay MacDonald will remain the leader of British Labor during the years that are left to him. "What will be the fate of MacDonald?" asks the German writer Rudolf Kircher in *Pillars and Powers*. "Many thinking men in England believe that the future of democracy depends on the answer to this question."

But Ramsay MacDonald has weathered many storms and each crisis has only added to his stature. When his rule was challenged by a section of his Party, after the collapse of his first Government in 1924, the question of his resignation was never even seriously discussed, for Labor was sensible enough to realize that his supremacy both as a Parliamentarian, a thinker and a leader could not be challenged. MacDonald could answer any rivals in the words of King Charles: "They will never kill me to make you king!"

The breach with the advocates of "Socialism in our Time" has grown still wider since that date, and there is a measure of rancor displayed by what is called the "ginger group" within the Labor ranks which might perturb, if not alarm, a weaker man than

<sup>2</sup> A typical example, written during a visit to Canada in 1928, is reproduced from the *Forward*. See Appendix L.

MacDonald. But he knows that if and when responsibility comes to his critics, they will be forced by the logic of events to realize that passing resolutions at conferences and trying to put them into practise upon a public either hostile or unprepared for them are two very different things.

Far more general was the criticism from his Cabinet colleagues after 1924 that MacDonald left them "in the dark" while in office. This may have sometimes been his policy, but it was certainly more often his temperament. For MacDonald's mind is one which works best in splendid isolation and his temperament aids and abets it.

"The test of life is whether a man can spend his leisure alone," he stated to an audience of students. "If he wants some one with him, he has not obtained mastery over himself." That is good, but carried as far as MacDonald has carried it, the virtue of the principle develops into a fault. It develops into a refusal to see the other man's point of view, into an intolerance of other people's opinions, into a hatred of compromise and a dislike of those who stand in his way.

The most obvious obstacle at the present time is, of course, the Liberal Party. It is not to be expected that Mr. MacDonald should count as one of his blessings the other Party with the tradition of reform, for it is natural that almost all of what the one Party will lose, the other must gain. The Labor Party has chiefly grown at the expense of Liberalism, and it is the continued existence of the Liberal Party, more than any other factor, that limits its prospects in the near future.

From the narrow party view MacDonald may be justified in repeating that "Liberalism has passed to us." He believes, as I have already said, that the moral fervor and spiritual urge formerly identified with Liberalism has been inherited by Labor. In a sense, he *must* believe it, for MacDonald is the Covenanter of modern politics, and his enthusiasm would evaporate were he not convinced that the spiritual urge of the old Radicalism was on his side. This man has introduced an almost religious intolerance into our political life—can it be wondered at that he opposes any

compromise which would be based, not upon conscience, but expediency?

Great as are both his responsibilities and his achievements, MacDonald does sometimes escape from politics and it is at such times, usually surrounded by the family he has shielded from the publicity which he cannot escape himself, that the real charm of the man captures the hearts even of his foes.

To get a glimpse of MacDonald *en pantoufles* one must journey to an old-world house in a quiet road at Hampstead.

It had long been his ambition to live on Hampstead Heights, and five years ago the opportunity came and the MacDonald family moved into a delightful home with an attractive garden and, essential feature, a fine room which could be made into a library and study. Alas, the large library was found to be quite incapable of containing even half the books that MacDonald would not allow himself to be separated from, with the result that two neighboring rooms have also been fitted with shelves.

There, in the bosom of his family, his eye lights up and he casts aside the cloak of office and the tremendous responsibilities which are his.

He has a wide knowledge of the beauties of his own country, a knowledge that extends to simple things that a townsman passes by. He can tell you the names and habits of all the birds that sing in his garden and the names and characteristics of all the flowers that grow there.

Some years ago a friend tried to convert him to the wireless. MacDonald was adamant against it at first, but when a set was fitted up at his house he became an enthusiastic devotee to the new craze. Since then he has had many sets, and whenever he has an hour to spare it is his delight to turn on a musical program. He is especially fond of the old songs of Scotland and never misses an opportunity of attending a good concert. His greatest musical joy is to listen to the Glasgow Orpheus Choir.

The great hour of the week at Frognal is the Sunday afternoon tea-party and the very few privileged persons to join in that



family function get sidelights on MacDonald's character which are never revealed elsewhere. The home-baked scones, bannocks and other Scottish concomitants of the family meal are there in lavish abundance.

Afterwards, the close friend will be taken up to the study for an hour, and there MacDonald will discuss books and literature with the discerning knowledge of the connoisseur. For this man can discuss literature and art with the same sure touch that the nation has learnt to expect in his political pronouncements.

Ramsay MacDonald's happiest moments are spent with his children or in the quiet sanctity of his study. An intimate friend once asked him how he would like to spend his life if there were no such thing as politics, and he replied: "Four hours a day reading and three hours a day writing would be to me an earthly paradise. I could ask for no greater joy in life than the rich company of my books and the leisure to set down on paper the thoughts that within me arise on all the problems and complexities of life."

Occasionally he plays golf. His handicap is about twelve, but he gets so few opportunities of playing that he never has been and never will be the really fine golfer he would have made under other conditions.

MacDonald at home is preeminently a family man, tremendously interested in his daughters' social and charitable activities, and in the careers they are now beginning. He is proud, too, that both Ishbel and Malcolm, his younger son, are members of the London County Council, the body on which he served his apprenticeship in practical political life a quarter of a century ago.

Had the political arena not absorbed him, MacDonald would have been well content to remain unknown. But there is that within his heart which led him unerringly into the greatest conflict of our generation.

One of the wittiest writers of to-day has endowed Mr. MacDonald with the epithet—"a moral beauty." Whether it was intended for sarcasm or flattery, it is true. From his earliest days he has infused his political beliefs with the beauty of an

ideal. He has lifted the movement from the dust and glare of the arena and given it a soul. If there is any future for the Labor Party—and few can be found to deny that there is—then I believe that its historians will point to this as MacDonald's greatest achievements.

When in 1924 the question of whether Labor should take office without power was still a matter of public speculation, he made a speech which revealed more completely than anything he has ever uttered the ideals that have inspired him and given him patience and courage.

"I want a Labor Government so that the life of the nation can be carried on: 1924 is not the last year of God's program of creation. We shall be dead and forgotten and generation after generation will come, and still the journey will be going on, still the search for the Holy Grail will be made by knights like Keir Hardie. The shield of love and the spear of justice will still be in the hands of good and upright men and women. And the ideal of a great future will still be in front of our people. I see no end, thank God, to these things. I see my own horizon, I see my own skyline, but I am convinced that when my children and my children's children get there, there will be another skyline, another horizon, another dawning, another glorious beckoning from Heaven itself. That is my faith, and in that faith I go on and my colleagues go on, doing in their lifetime what they can to make their generation contribute something substantial to the well-being and happiness and holiness of human life."

No wonder that these noble words, spoken to a great audience by him who was once a poor "Lossie loon," moved the men and women who heard them.

For in that peroration there was revealed the soul of the Labor Party, enshrined in words which could come only from the man who had brought that Party out of the nowhere, into the present, and bade it look without flinching towards that To-morrow which, if it comes, he more than any one else will have made possible.



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

*Speech delivered by J. Ramsay MacDonald at Temperance Hall, Leicester, on the occasion of his adoption as Labor Candidate for Leicester, October 3rd, 1899.*

I AM addressing you to-night at the joint request of the Independent Labor Party and the Trades Council, and I appear before you as a candidate independent of both the Liberal and Tory caucus. On the platform with me, and supporting my candidature, are members—some of them sent here officially—of every body like the Trade Unions, the Co-operative Societies and the Friendly Societies, that has declared that if the condition of labor is to be improved it must be by the combined efforts of the working-classes themselves.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I know that some of you are very much puzzled about such candidatures as that upon which I am about to enter. You think it a wrecking candidature. I would fain hope that you will believe that I put my hand to the plow moved by no spirit of reckless adventure, but convinced that the issues which the Labor Party raises are of such supreme importance, and are so misunderstood and neglected by both Liberals and Tories, that for a third time the electors of Leicester should be offered an opportunity of voting for an Independent Labor Candidate at the ballot box. With respect to one idea that some of you entertain, I want to join issue here and now. You say I am splitting the democratic vote. I am not. I come here and find the democratic vote so split that the democratic will has little influence. I find Trade Unionist voting against Trade Unionist, and Cooperator against Cooperator, and Worker against Worker, with the result that Leicester politics, instead of being the outspoken opinions of independent men, are fast becoming the tottering, timorous, commonplaces and compromises with which Liberals used to attempt to win belated cathedral cities and ultra-respectable Liberal-Conservative constituencies. Who hears of Leicester Radicalism now, as I used to hear of it as a boy, in my remote home? To talk as though the democracy in this



town were united, and as though I were coming in to spread confusion in the bosom of a happy family—is absurd. I cannot divide you more than Liberalism and Toryism divide you, but it will be one of my aims to lay down a program and a policy which will unite all those of progressive interests and instincts.

We have a Tory Government in power, thanks mainly to the ineffectiveness of Liberal legislation when the Liberals were last in office, and to the petty quarrels which the Liberals took with them to the constituencies. And this Tory Government is none of your old-fashioned Tory Governments. It is mainly inspired by one of the greatest demagogues of the century, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and it has partly to thank his social program for its present position. Now, that program was very enticing. Rating relief, old-age pensions, good houses, compensation for all injuries, were offers which were not to be despised, and the working-classes—or that part of them who assumed that they could do nothing but vote either Liberal or Tory—were perfectly entitled to give the Tory social program a chance. They have given it a chance. And with what result? Mr. Chamberlain boasts that ten out of eleven of the social items have been legislated upon, but in not a single case has the legislation been satisfactory, in not a single case has the hope of the workers who voted Tory been realized. We have had a Rating Act which does not relieve rates, but which *does* raise land values; we have had a Clergy Relief Act which proceeds on the dictum of Biblical ethics, that to him who hath shall be given and from him who hath not shall be taken away. We have had a Compensation Act which does not compensate, and a Housing Act which does not house. The result is that the pendulum is swinging towards Liberalism. The elector who assumes that the Liberal and the Tory parties are as eternal as the hills, and whose whole political life is spent in jumping from the frying-pan into the fire because he is comfortable in neither one nor the other, is beginning apparently to jump into the fire in testimony against the frying-pan. So much for the workers' experience of Toryism.

And now, what of Liberalism? I am not here to curse the great historical Liberal Party. Speaking generally, historical Liberalism is the mortar with which the foundations of our political liberty have been cemented. But let me take an opportunity now of dealing with one of those errors carefully nurtured by partisan orators and partisan pamphlets. When you think of the Liberal Party and its work, you imagine a body of men dating from towards the end of last century, working

harmoniously together, unanimously agreeing on every democratic reform which has marked the way of the nineteenth century, ever ready to listen to the promptings of progress, ever watchful to do the will of the democracy. No idea is further removed than that from the real facts of history. No such body of men ever existed. You will remember the method which Charles the Great adopted for the conversion of the barbarians of Europe to Christianity. He went to them with the holy water of baptism in one hand and the mighty sword of extirpation in the other, and asked them to make their choice. The wise barbarians chose the holy water in preference to the mighty sword. It was by precisely the same method that the Liberal Party has kept democratic. It has been threatened over and over again with destruction or conversion, and under the circumstances it underwent the saving change of conversion.

Pray bear with me a minute or two whilst I prove that statement. I could take any number of instances if I had time, but I shall take two of, as you suppose, the very strongest against myself. Perhaps if there are two reforms which are claimed by Liberals with more pride than any others they are the Ballot and Free Trade. Now both of these became Liberal measures only after the most bitter opposition on the part of the Liberal Party, only after Independent candidates were promoted on their behalf, only after the Independent politicians had shown the Liberals that it was simply a question of the mighty sword or the holy water. For forty years the Liberals opposed the ballot. The father of the scheme, Mr. Grote, often and often wrote and spoke in the strain of this which I extract from one of his letters, in which he dealt with the fear which haunts so many of you to this day—the fear of letting in the Tories. “Even that,” said Grote, “will be a slight improvement, rather than otherwise, upon our present state.” If I said that, with how much passion would you call me a mere tool in the hands of the Tories! But those words were written by the father of the ballot, and expressed his experience of the Liberal Party.

And now I turn to the claim that the Liberal Party abolished the Corn Laws. Again, I do not give you my opinion. I select one of many things which Richard Cobden wrote and spoke explaining how the Anti-Corn Law Agitation was successful. Some of you here remember the attempt made after Peel’s conversion to claim for the Liberals the credit of the victory. Then Cobden uttered these words:—“I will be no party to such a fraud. I see no advantage, but much danger to our cause,

from the present efforts to set up the old Party distinctions *and calm reflection tells me that isolation is more and more the true policy of the League.*"

How well those political giants whom the ordinary Liberal ignorantly worships would understand our methods, and how eloquently, were they here to-night, would they tell you and prove to you, that from such actions as ours all progress has come.

You say, "The Liberal Party is good enough for me. Its program is not all I should like, but it will do to go on with." I believe you are altogether mistaken in the trust you repose on official Liberalism. I wish you had been in the House of Commons on the day when the case of your Guardians was before the House, and had seen the futility of the debate. The matter raised was one of the most important that any Liberal could have had put under his charge, and yet it was debated as though it had been a topic from Timbuctoo. As one of the best known of those interested wrote afterwards, the debate was a farce. But it is typical of Liberal inefficiency. I do not believe that the Liberal Party will give you anything but the merest shadow of what you expect of it. I do not believe it will face the House of Lords; that it will give you an Eight Hours Day; that it will tax Land Values; that it will reform to any great extent our Registration Law; that it will pursue a democratic foreign policy. I know some of you think I am too skeptical. But have you ever taken the trouble of examining what guarantees you have that your expectations are well founded?

You must remember two things. The Liberal opposition is not promising you anything now that it did not promise you before the election of 1892, and since then Liberals were three years in office. They tried their best and they failed. When elections are to be won, and where the party is in opposition, Newcastle programs are manufactured and valiant speeches made. But when the party is in power the sinister influences of its rich supporters are paramount. The failure of the last Government was not that it had only forty-one of a majority, but that a majority of the forty-one were poor, weak-kneed creatures. In addition, I know that it is the opinion of the best Radicals in the House of Commons that the Liberal Party is becoming more and more mediocre in its powers, and passing more and more completely into the possession of its moneyed men.

Moreover, let me draw your attention to the extraordinary way in which recent bye-elections have been won. I have taken the trouble to

examine the candidates' election addresses and to follow their speeches up to the polling day. I began my task hoping in this way to arrive at some idea as to what Liberalism is. But what did I find? Well, I found to my astonishment that there was not a single plank in the Liberal program which some candidates were not willing to sacrifice if a vote or two were to be gained by doing so. The Liberal candidate for East Berks tried to win by pledging himself to support a Tithes Relief Bill on the lines of the hated Tory Bill of last Session, and a similar pledge was given by Mr. Soames when contesting South Norfolk. The first Southport election was won upon Leasehold Enfranchisement, after we had been told that the Liberal Party had washed its hands of this heresy for ever. I may say, parenthetically, that the Edinburgh victories were obtained upon pledges to support taxation of land values—pledges which the only Liberal paper of any importance in Scotland, the *Dundee Advertiser*, referred to in these words: "When Mr. Dewar and Mr. McCrae (these were the Liberal candidates, you will remember) come within the circle of Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman's influence they will feel the imprudence of weighting the Liberal Party with policies which it cannot carry and exciting hopes in the popular mind which cannot be realized." Middleton was won only after the candidate had issued an explanation of his educational faith which was at variance with every tenet of Liberalism. The successful Liberal at Osgoldcross fought on a revolt against Sir William Harcourt's Local Veto Bill. The Liberal candidate for Elland professed himself to be personally in favor of Mr. Robson's Bill, but he promised to sacrifice his conviction in order to gain a score or so of votes—and, in a few weeks afterwards, that embodiment of moral and political rectitude was held up by Sir Campbell Bannerman, in an after-dinner speech at Cambridge, as a most promising addition to the forces of Liberalism in Parliament. Nay, more. The member for Stockport, who has recently joined the Opposition, has been one of the most bitter enemies of Labor in the House of Commons, and within a day or two of his change of political color he was the leader of that little handful of Tory members who defied their own leaders, who spurned the advice of their own press, and opposed to the last stage a Bill which is one of the mildest and most innocent protections which helpless children have against mistaken employers on the one hand and undutiful parents on the other. And yet he is ostentatiously accepted into the Liberal fold, and his conversion is blazed



abroad from John o' Groats to Land's End. I ask you again, you honest Liberals, where are your guarantees?

I have not made these remarks in any spirit of carping criticism. I have been trying to show you that there is no real unanimity inside the Liberal Party (especially amongst its Members of Parliament) on the great questions affecting labor and democratic government; that Liberalism is so mixed in its sympathies and so confused in its ideas that should it be returned to office with no independent men to watch its action and threaten to expose it in the Commons, it will be so shilly-shallying, so anxious to please its Kitsons and its Joiceys, that it will dishearten the progressive opinion of the country, and prepare a way, as it did last time, for a long term of reactionary government. What is the advantage of three years of Liberal rule if it has to be followed by seven years of a Tory Government?

This, I think, will be a sufficient explanation to those of you who agree with me that progress is the life of nations, why I do not think that there is much use in returning an ordinary member of the Liberal Party to represent a constituency like this in Parliament.

I have been trying to carry you with me, so far, because I want to carry you with me still further. Now, ladies and gentlemen, however much you may object to the Independent Labor Party, you must admit that it has done one thing. You must admit that it has taken up the social question, the labor question, the question of poverty, the question of the social and economic rights of the wage-earners, and has placed it right in the center of the political field and has defied anybody and everybody to remove it from that place of vantage.

For, what did the democracy find when the vote was surrendered to them? They found that one in every three, perhaps two in every three of the working-classes, who had reached the age of sixty-five, were paupers; six out of every seven households in the country were poor and struggling. Ninety per cent of the enfranchised wage-earners were separated from poverty by so narrow a partition that an extra frost, a whim of fashion, a panic, threw them upon the mercy of the charitable. They heard a great deal about the right to property, but property to them meant little more than a precarious holding of a few household effects. When they looked at the metropolis of the richest and mightiest empire in the world, they discovered that 50,000 people had no home; about one in every three of the whole population were on or below the poverty line; one death in every five was in a workhouse, hospital, or

lunatic asylum. The average workman is hurried through school, and whilst still there becomes a wage-earner of some petty kind. He leaves about eleven, and is put to some temporary occupation, or to some work chosen because it is convenient, not because he is fitted for it. A notice in a shop window determines whether he is to be an engineer or a grocer; perhaps had he turned to the left instead of to the right on the eventful day when he finally chose his work, he might have entered a warehouse or mounted on a cart tail. When he has settled down he is still in the hands of imperious chance. The worker lives on the slopes of a volcano. It may serve his time; it may overwhelm him. But whilst he is a worker, the rumblings and grumbings of the titanic forces below, over which he has no control and can have no control, keep him in constant dread, if he thinks at all, that a catastrophe is coming. There are not 5 per cent of the wage-earners in Leicester guaranteed in a livelihood for six months. The man who has no property in his own labor, who has no guarantee that an honest day's work will always bring him an honest day's wage, is a stranger in his own land, and no right to vote will ever make him a citizen. It matters not where you go, whether to the virgin fields of the Western American States; to the smoke-clad valleys of Lancashire or Pennsylvania; to the Russian village, where the forge is only just lit and the loom has just begun to rattle; whether you go to a free republic, or to a monarchic despotism; whether you go where the worker is thrifty and temperate or where he is thriftless and intemperate, amongst all differences of race and creed and habit, you will find the inevitable growth of a class owning the land and the instruments which the laborer must use in working for a living. You will find that the laborer is being allowed to live, not because being human he should not be allowed to die of neglect in a ditch, but because from him profit can be made; you will find that the furnaces are lit and the shuttles are flying, not for the benefit of the community, but in the interests of a class; you will find that poverty and deprivation are the fate of the many, because it has not yet been discovered how the few can otherwise flourish.

Those are the things which high Trade Union levies, periods of unemployment, slum dwellings, poor wages and long hours have forced upon the attention of the British democracy. Politicians are no longer concerned with getting votes, but with using votes. The fit and proper person to represent the democracy is no longer a man who gives himself

an old party name, but one who understands those social problems, who believes that both poverty and charity are unnecessary, and who is convinced that it is quite within the limits of practical politics to elevate the workers to a place of independence and security. But to-day, working-men, both Liberal and Tory, support men who in every labor dispute are banded against labor. It is an extraordinary spectacle. Men, wearied by their labors on a committee charged with the destruction of combined labor, hasten to a political platform, where they are greeted by Trade Union officials and encouraged by the cheers of the very men whom they are fighting. Such is the spell cast upon the democracy by the utterance of a party name!

"But," you may argue, "you are a Socialist, and therefore we cannot support you." Well, what is the Socialist remedy? It is simply this: the organization of labor under public, democratic control, so that a better distribution of labor and of wealth will result. Some people must always have a pet horror. But whether the people of Leicester are frightened at Socialism or not they are very proud to make money by it. According to a Government return which I have just been examining, you are making £35,711 a year from your water supply, £55,047 from your gas, £1,857 from your electric lighting, £5,435 from your markets; and not a single halfpenny of this £96,000 would you be making unless you were wise enough to be Socialists so far as your water, gas, electric lighting, and markets are concerned. It is too late to shiver at me as a monster of iniquity coming to take away your liberties and deprive you of your property. He who has eyes to see and ears to hear knows that the true description of the Socialist is "a champion of liberty and a defender of the rights of property." He wants all to be free, and all who contribute to the wealth and well-being of society to own property. But what a farce it is to talk about liberty and property, when more than half the wage-earners dare not speak and act as they like, and when 939 out of every 1000 persons who die do not leave so much behind them as to make it worth any one's while to be their heirs.

This is what I want to emphasize. It is too late for you to object to Socialism. You are beginning to live in it. Taking the country all over, ratepayers are benefiting to the extent of £3,600,000, because they have been wise enough to put a few Socialist ideas into practise. For these undertakings are the beginnings of our general purpose that the community as a whole should look after the general welfare; that

the public conscience should take the place of private interest in settling the conditions under which a man should work; that the only enlightened view of self-help is based upon the ideas of cooperation and solidarity.

We have no hope that the Socialist idea is to be realized in a day. But with independent men in Parliament who "read the riddle of the times aright," and who have convictions, the pace can be hastened, and obstacles placed in the way of those Liberals and Tories alike who get the working-class support by promising a great deal, and who spend their time in Parliament devising how to fulfil their promises in appearance merely. There are some half-dozen reforms requiring immediate attention. There is the task of making our democracy real and not a sham; the abolition of the absurd distinction between occupier and lodger; of the twelve months' residence within a constituency; and of the present system of annual registration. We need the House of Commons brought into closer touch with the electorate, so that members may be more responsive to the popular will. The House of Lords should be abolished. To talk of only limiting its veto is silly nonsense.

The time has also come, I think, when the adult workman should have more liberty for self-improvement, and that can only come from a shortening of the working-day. An eight hours' day can be worked without any serious menace to our position on the markets of the world. Another matter pressing for treatment is the protection of the injured workman. Now, you are making a great mistake if you imagine that Mr. Asquith's proposals are to afford that protection. It is one thing to tell the workman that a Bill is to be introduced making compensation universal, but quite another thing to secure that every small employer and every vanishing business are to pay their money under the law. Factory inspection must be more thorough, and the lower grades of competent inspectors must receive a higher status at the Home Office than they now have. A public inquiry should be held into every serious accident, and when an employer is found to be grossly negligent he should be subject to a criminal prosecution. Finally, the State must guarantee that compensation is paid. Employers should be compelled to exhibit at suitable places in all works the chief provisions of the Law of Compensation, so that every workman may know how to claim.

And now I am left with a series of questions all more or less de-



pending upon the right of the community to the land of the country. I can only mention two. In the first place there is the question of Old Age Pensions. We know the Tory scheme; we know how utterly absurd and inadequate it is. The Liberals have no scheme at all. If these pensions are to be acceptable to the honest toilers, they must be quite free from the pauper taint. If they are to be brought to the door of every deserving person the overburdened ratepayer must not be called upon to find them, or to find any part of them. If they are to be accepted by the votes of the electors generally, they must not be paid for by the poor income-tax payer. The meaning of those conditions is this: Old Age Pensions must be paid from new sources of national income, and the new sources which must occur to every one are a graduated income-tax very heavy at its upper end and a tax levied upon income derived from the land which the community has made valuable. The other question I want to mention relates to the housing of the people. A housing policy and a land policy cannot be separated. So long as land remains private property you might as well try to carry water in a sieve as to secure that reductions in rents, free education, and so on, remain as extra money in the workers' pockets. It is a great tribute to the wisdom, both theoretical and practical, of the Socialist position, that no one of any authority suggests that private persons and the private ownership of houses are to get us out of our difficulties. By common consent the housing problem is to be solved only by a further extension of municipal Socialism.

(Mr. MacDonald then proceeded to refer to the Transvaal. He feared war was inevitable. The armies were too near each other. He summarized the course of events which had resulted in the crisis, and showed that the Boers were beset with enormous political difficulties when gold was discovered, especially after 1885, but that there was a strong Progressive political party in the Transvaal prepared to give equal rights. The Jameson raid postponed the triumph of this party. Had negotiations been conducted differently, the suspicions of the Boers would have been disarmed. No one reading the Blue Books without prejudice could come to any other conclusion than that, despite skilfully interjected, meaningless peace phrases, Mr. Chamberlain and Sir Alfred Milner had made peace impossible. Had the Boers been cowards, the massing of British troops on the Transvaal borders would have made them yield, but they were not cowards, and they would consequently be forced very likely to begin fighting. "Moments are

awaiting us when we shall look back upon this war, if it comes to war, as one of the most unnecessary, the most miserable and most unworthy which has stained our arms and sullied our fame."

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I must leave the issues with you, for you are the sovereign authority in all matters relating to the common well-being. I have tried to show by evidence that cannot be challenged, that all progress has come from independent parties, independent candidates, independent members; that reform has come from the robust opinions of a thinking democracy, not from the mechanical chorus of a party following. I have also tried to show you that in every current political topic my vote is certain to go on the side of those whom I can truly call "mine own people"—those upon whom the decree has fallen that by the sweat of their brows (let me add, and of their souls) they shall labor all the days of their lives. In other words, I have been upholding for your approval the characteristics which you used to admire in your old representatives. For when Mr. Justin McCarthy, in his recently published "Reminiscences," wishes to explain the political qualities of your late member, Mr. Peter Taylor, he does it in these words: "A man who could never be of great account as a partisan, because he cared much more for measures than for party, and the whips found him immovable except when his own convictions and conscience combined with the official appeal." My third attempt has been more difficult to attain. I have endeavored, whilst criticizing my opponents, to remove the seat of political enthusiasm from the barren wastes of partisan loyalty, to the generous plains of a human ideal. The task of the Twentieth Century is to bring peace to dwell within the land, and happiness to rest upon the hearth. In those declining years, in the twilight days of a long and glorious epoch in which this constituency has played such a foremost part, he who detains you as he opens the records that have been written and asks you to dwell in the battles that have been fought, or whose eyes see nought but the next few steps ahead, is not entitled to be ranked amongst the forward spirits of the time. The cause of Progress demands that it should be placed under the guardianship of those who are already prophesying of the day of the coming century, of those who foresee the change in its politics: for only those who in their own hearts have a knowledge of the stirrings of the human spirit which are to mold our institutions and determine

the course of our industry, can lead us onwards through the times we are facing as we look across the confines of the nineteenth century into the unexplored and, for human possibility, boundless fields of the twentieth.

## APPENDIX B

*Speech by J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., at "Victory Demonstration" of the Labor Party held at Queen's Hall, London, after the General Election 1906, reproduced from the official records of the Party.*

MR. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P., remarked that that was the first meeting that had ever been called in any town in the country to celebrate the return of a genuine Labor Party to the House of Commons. Labor had fought in days gone by to be recognized by Liberals and by Tories, Labor in January fought to be recognized by the electors of the country as an independent, responsible and intelligent party in the councils of the nation. Up to now the Labor Party had always been subordinate in politics. The cottage had had to fight for the palace, and the palace had always been neglecting to legislate in the interests of the cottage. The cottage the previous month said, "I am going to fight for myself, and I am going to work and legislate for myself, because my experience has been that if I don't do it, nobody else will do it for me." For a few fleeting moments, once every five years or so on the average, the great democracy of the country has been the sovereign party in the country. It has been cajoled by Primrose dames; it has been bribed by candidates on both sides, who had more money than political intelligence at their command. It had been made drunken with Imperialistic sentiment, which enabled the anti-social classes to exploit the industrial classes more than they had been able to exploit them before. They had been talking too much about the voice of democracy being the voice of God. At the last election the voice of the democracy was nothing of the kind. The voice of the democracy was the voice of a blind man wandering in the wilderness without guide, without courage, without hope. That had passed away. Last month they had a voice given out from the democracy that at any rate, in some instances, seemed as if it came from the heavens itself. The Labor representatives were there, twenty-nine of them; as their leader had said, a Labor Party without adjective or qualification, and "Labor" was good enough for them; they were a Labor Party without responsibilities, except to the great toil-



ing masses for whose votes and sympathies they appealed last month; a Party that would support no Government unless that Government was advancing the frontiers of righteousness in this country; a Party which would oppose no Government that was honestly and genuinely advancing those frontiers.

Their opponents told the Labor Party that they were terribly afraid of them. He was not sorry that they were. It was time those people got frightened at somebody because they were beginning to be like the unjust lawyer, of whom they were told in the Scriptures, that he feared neither God nor anybody else. Their opponents were frightened at them, because, they said, they were impractical people; even the presence of their old friend Shackleton was not good enough for them in that respect. The other parties had ruled the country, the national income of which was now in round figures, 1,800 millions; yet these practical people could not solve the unemployed problem, nor answer the question why men and women were "too old at forty," or how to keep decent, honest, honorable men and women out of the workhouse. These "practical" ruling classes had been blind to over-population and over-crowding in the towns; yet if they would go with him a railway journey to any part of the country, North, South, East or West, he would show them acres upon acres, square mile upon square mile, of land out of cultivation. The other day a few hundred boot and shoe operatives tramped to London. They had holes in the bottoms of their boots, and they had to shoe them out of their charity in London. Yet this "practical governing class" told them that there was no demand for these men's labor as boot and shoemakers—nevertheless every man was improperly shod! What a strange mystery it was. These men wanted shoes, and they wanted to make shoes, yet this practical governing class could not arrive at an economical solution of the matter, and could not show them how they could go into a boot and shoe factory and make the boots and shoes they required for themselves.

It had also been alleged that the Labor Party would split up the democracy and divide them more than they were divided then. Their friend Shackleton had given the reply, and no one was more capable of giving a reply for Trade Unionism than the deputy-chairman of the Labor Party in the House of Commons. He would give the political reply as well. Let them take two men from the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The Lancashire workman suffers from precisely the

same economic evils as the Yorkshire workman—low wages, high rents, the oppressive power of the landlord, underfed children, unemployment. Every question that affects Yorkshire affects Lancashire. Yet in the old days of these men with the same political and social platforms, half of them in Lancashire sent Tories to represent them in the House of Commons, and the other half, in Yorkshire, sent Liberals to represent them. Thus, when any great social question was before the House in which the Yorkshire and Lancashire men had precisely the same interests, the representatives of Lancashire went into one lobby, and the representatives of Yorkshire went into the other! And so far as political influence and power were concerned, they might have wiped both Yorkshire and Lancashire off the map. The Labor Party had stopped that, and they were going to stop it in the future more effectually even than they did last month.

## APPENDIX C

*Speech delivered by J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., leader of the Labor Party, in the House of Commons, on August 3rd, 1914, during debate on British Ultimatum to Germany.*

I SHOULD, had circumstances permitted, have preferred to remain silent this afternoon. But circumstances do not permit of that. I shall model what I have to say on the two speeches we have listened to, and I shall be brief. The right hon. Gentleman, to a House, which in a great majority is with him, has delivered a speech the echoes of which will go down in history. The speech has been impressive, but however much we may resist the conclusion to which he has come, we have not been able to resist the moving character of his appeal. I think he is wrong. I think the Government which he represents and for which he speaks is wrong. I think the verdict of history will be that they are wrong. We shall see. The effect of the right hon. Gentleman's speech in this House is not to be its final effect. There may be opportunities, or there may not be opportunities for us to go into details, but I want to say to this House, and to say it without equivocation, if the right hon. Gentleman had come here to-day and told us that our country is in danger, I do not care what party he appealed to, or to what class he appealed, we would be with him and behind him. If this is so, we will vote him what money he wants. Yes, and we will go further. We will offer him ourselves if the country is in danger. But he has not persuaded me that it is. He has not persuaded my hon. Friends who cooperate with me that it is, and I am perfectly certain, when his speech gets into cold print to-morrow, he will not persuade a large section of the country. If the nation's honor were in danger we would be with him. There has been no crime committed by statesmen of this character without those statesmen appealing to their nation's honor. We fought the Crimean War because of our honor. We rushed to South Africa because of our honor. The right hon. Gentleman is appealing to us to-day because of our honor. There is a third point. If the right hon. Gentleman could come to us and tell us that a small European nationality like Belgium

is in danger, and could assure us he is going to confine the conflict to that question, then we would support him. What is the use of talking about coming to the aid of Belgium, when, as a matter of fact, you are engaging in a whole European War which is not going to leave the map of Europe in the position it is in now. The right hon. Gentleman said nothing about Russia. We want to know about that. We want to try to find out what is going to happen, when it is all over, to the power of Russia in Europe, and we are not going to go blindly into this conflict without having some sort of a rough idea as to what is going to happen. Finally, so far as France is concerned, we say solemnly and definitely that no such friendship as the right hon. Gentleman describes between one nation and another could ever justify one of those nations entering into war on behalf of the other. If France is really in danger, if, as the result of this, we are going to have the power, civilization and genius of France removed from European history, then let him so say. But it is an absolutely impossible conception which we are talking about to endeavor to justify that which the right hon. Gentleman has foreshadowed. I not only know, but I feel that the feeling of the House is against us. I have been through this before, and 1906 came as part recompense. It will come again. We are going to go through it all. We will go through it all. So far as we are concerned, whatever may happen, whatever may be said about us, whatever attacks may be made upon us, we will take the action that we will take of saying that this country ought to have remained neutral, because in the deepest parts of our hearts, we believe that that was right and that that alone was consistent with the honor of the country and the traditions of the party that are now in office.



## APPENDIX D

*Article by J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., containing his views on origins of the Great War. Reprinted from the "Labour Leader," August, 1914.*

### "WHY WE ARE AT WAR"

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SIR EDWARD GREY

ON that fatal Sunday, the second of August, I met in Whitehall a member of the Cabinet and he told me of the messages and conversations between Foreign Secretaries and Ambassadors which were to be published for the purpose of showing how we strove for peace and how Germany immovably went to war. "It will have a great effect on public opinion," he said, and he was right. It is called "Correspondence respecting the European Crisis," but is generally referred to as "The White Paper." I wish to comment upon it for the purpose of explaining its significance.

It begins with a conversation between Sir Edward Grey and the German Ambassador on July 20 regarding the Austrian threat to punish Servia, and finishes with the delivery of our ultimatum to Germany on August 4. From it certain conclusions appear to be justified, the following in particular:

1. Sir Edward Grey strove to the last to prevent a European war.
2. Germany did next to nothing for peace, but it is not clear whether she actually encouraged Austria to pursue her Servian policy.
3. The mobilization of Russia drove Germany to war.
4. Russia and France strove, from the very beginning, both by open pressure and by wiles, to get us to commit ourselves to support them in the event of war.
5. Though Sir Edward Grey would not give them a pledge he made the German Ambassador understand that we might not keep out of the conflict.
6. During the negotiations Germany tried to meet our wishes on certain points so as to secure our neutrality. Sometimes her proposals

were brusque, but no attempt was made by us to negotiate diplomatically to improve them. They were all summarily rejected by Sir Edward Grey. Finally, so anxious was Germany to confine the limits of the war, the German Ambassador asked Sir Edward Grey to propose his own conditions of neutrality, and Sir Edward Grey declined to discuss the matter. *This fact was suppressed by Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith in their speeches in Parliament.*

7. When Sir Edward Grey failed to secure peace between Germany and Russia, he worked deliberately to involve us in the war, using Belgium as his chief excuse.

That is the gist of the White Paper. It proves quite conclusively that those who were in favor of neutrality before the second of August ought to have remained in favor of it after the White Paper was published.

That Sir Edward Grey should have striven for European peace and then, when he failed, that he should have striven with equal determination to embroil Great Britain, seems contradictory. But it is not, and the explanation of why it is not is the justification of those of us who for the last eight years have regarded Sir Edward Grey as a menace to the peace of Europe and his policy as a misfortune to our country. What is the explanation?

Great Britain in Europe can pursue one of two policies. It can keep on terms of general friendship with the European nations, treating with each separately when necessary and cooperating with all on matters of common interest. To do this effectively it has to keep its hands clean. It has to make its position clear, and its sympathy has to be boldly given to every movement for liberty. This is a policy which requires great faith, great patience, and great courage. Its foundations are being built by our own International, and if our Liberal Government had only followed it since 1905 it would by this time have smashed the military autocracies which have brought us into war.

But there is a more alluring policy—apparently easier, apparently safer, apparently more direct, but in reality more difficult, more dangerous, and less calculable. That is the policy of the balance of power through alliance. Weak and short-sighted Ministers have al-

ways resorted to this because it is the policy of the instincts rather than of the reason. It formed groups of Powers on the continent. It divided Europe into two great hostile camps—Germany, Austria and Italy, on the one hand; Russia, France, and ourselves on the other. The progeny of this policy is suspicion and armaments; its end is war and the smashing up of the very balance which it is designed to maintain. When war comes it is then bound to be universal. Every nation is on one rope or another and when one slips it drags its allies with it.

As a matter of practical experience the very worst form of alliance is the *entente*. An alliance is definite. Every one knows his responsibilities under it. The *entente* deceives the people. When Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey kept assuring the House of Commons that we had contracted no obligations by our *entente* with France they said what was literally true but substantially untrue. That is why stupid or dishonest statesmen prefer the *entente* to the alliance; it permits them to see hard facts through a veil of sentimental vagueness. Had we had a definite alliance with France and Russia the only difference would have been that we and everybody else should have known what we had let ourselves in for and that might have averted the war. Italy could keep out of the turmoil because its membership of the alliance imposed only definite obligations upon it; we were dragged in because our *entente* involved us in an indefinite maze of honorable commitments.

It is interesting to gather from Sir Edward Grey's speech of August 3 and the White Paper how completely the *entente* entangled him. There were first of all the "conversations" between French and British naval and army experts from 1906 onwards. These produced plans of naval and military operations which France and we were to take jointly together. It was in accordance with these schemes that the northern coasts of France were left unprotected by the French Navy. *When Sir Edward Grey evoked our sympathy on the ground that the French northern coasts were unprotected, he did not tell us that he had agreed that they should be unprotected and that the French Fleet should be concentrated in the Mediterranean.*

These "conversations" were carried on for about six years without the knowledge or consent of the Cabinet. The military plans were sent to St. Petersburg and a Grand Duke (so well-informed authorities say)

connected with the German Party in Russia sent them to Berlin. Germany has known for years that there were military arrangements between France and ourselves, and that Russia would fit her operations into these plans.

We had so mixed ourselves up in the Franco-Russian alliance that Sir Edward Grey had to tell us on August 3 that though our hands were free our honor was pledged!

The country had been so helplessly committed to fight for France and Russia that Sir Edward Grey had to refuse point blank every overture made by Germany to keep us out of the conflict. That is why, when reporting the negotiations to the House of Commons, he found it impossible to tell the whole truth and to put impartially what he chose to tell us. He scoffed at the German guarantee to Belgium on the ground that it only secured the "integrity" of the country, but not its independence; when the actual documents appeared it was found that its independence was secured as well. And that is not the worst. The White Paper contains several offers which were made to us by Germany aimed at securing our neutrality. None were quite satisfactory in their form and Sir Edward Grey left the impression that these unsatisfactory proposals were all that Germany made. Later on the Prime Minister did the same. *Both withheld the full truth from us.* The German Ambassador saw Sir Edward Grey, according to the White Paper, on August 1—and this is our Foreign Minister's note of the conversation:

The Ambassador pressed me as to whether I could not formulate conditions upon which we could remain neutral. He even suggested that the integrity of France and her Colonies might be guaranteed.

Sir Edward Grey declined to consider neutrality on any conditions, and refrained from reporting this conversation to the House. Why? It was the most important proposal that Germany made. Had this been told to us by Sir Edward Grey his speech could not have worked up a war sentiment. The hard, immovable fact was that Sir Edward Grey had so pledged the country's honor without the country's knowledge to fight for France or Russia, that he was not in a position even to discuss neutrality. That was the state of affairs on the 20th of July and did not arise from anything Germany did or did not do after that date.



Now, the apparent contradiction that the man who had worked for European peace was at the same time the leader of the war party in the Cabinet can be explained. Sir Edward Grey strove to undo the result of his policy, and keep Europe at peace but, when he failed, he found himself committed to dragging his country into war.

Without this wide survey of policy it is impossible to estimate either Sir Edward Grey's culpability or Germany's share of blame.

Germany's share is a heavy one. Taking a narrow view, she, with Russia, is mainly responsible for the war; taking a longer view, we are equally responsible. The conflict between the *entente* and the alliance had to come and only two things determined the time of its coming. The first was the relative capacity of the countries to bear the burdens of an armed peace. That was reaching its limit in most countries. The second was the question of how the changes which time was bringing were affecting adversely the military power of the respective opponents. The alliance was to receive a great blow on the death of the Austrian Emperor; Russia was building a system of strategic railways up to the German frontier, and this was to be finished in 1916, by which time her Army was to be increased greatly. The *entente* therefore was forcing Germany to fight within two years. We can understand the military mind of Germany faced with these threatening changes if we remember how scared we were when we were told of German threats against ourselves. The stubbornness of Germany, shown on every page of the White Paper, was not merely military offensiveness, but the stand of a country being put into difficulties by time tipping the balance of power against it. The breaking point had been reached. Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors had to give place to the war lords.

So I come back to the statement which I think I have clearly proven: that the European war is the result of the existence of the *entente* and the alliance, and that we are in it in consequence of Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy.

The justifications offered are nothing but the excuses which Ministers can always produce for mistakes. Let me take the case of Belgium. It has been known for years that, in the event of a war between Russia and France on the one hand and Germany on the other, the only possible military tactics for Germany to pursue were to attack

France hot foot through Belgium, and then return to meet the Russians. The plans were in our War Office. They were discussed quite openly during the Agadir trouble, and were the subject of some magazine articles, particularly one by Mr. Belloc. Mr. Gladstone made it clear in 1870 that in a general conflict formal neutrality might be violated. He said in the House of Commons in August, 1870:

I am not able to subscribe to the doctrine of those who have held in this House what plainly amounts to an assertion that the simple fact of the existence of a guarantee is binding on every party to it, irrespective altogether of the particular position in which it may find itself at the time when the occasion for acting on the guarantee arises.

Germany's guarantees to Belgium would have been accepted by Mr. Gladstone. *If France had decided to attack Germany through Belgium, Sir Edward Grey would not have objected, but would have justified himself by Mr. Gladstone's opinions.*

We knew Germany's military plans. We obtained them through the usual channels of spies and secret service. We knew that the road through Belgium was an essential part of them. That was our opportunity to find a "disinterested" motive apart from the obligations of the *entente*. It is well known that a nation will not fight except for a cause in which idealism is mingled. The *Daily Mail* supplied the idealism for the South African war by telling lies about the flogging of British women and children; our Government supplied the idealism for this war by telling us that the independence of Belgium had to be vindicated by us. Before it addressed its enquiries to France and Germany upon this point, knowing the military exigencies of both countries, it knew that France could reply suitably whilst Germany could not do so. It was a pretty little game in hypocrisy which the magnificent valor of the Belgians will enable the Government to hide up for the time being.

Such are the facts of the case. It is a diplomatists' war, made by about half-a-dozen men. Up to the moment that Ambassadors were withdrawn the peoples were at peace. They had no quarrel with each other; they bore each other no ill-will. Half-a-dozen men brought Europe to the brink of a precipice and Europe fell over it because it could not help itself. To-day our happy industrial prospects of a

fortnight ago are darkened. Suffering has come to be with us. Ruin stares many of us in the face. Little comfortable businesses are wrecked, tiny incomes have vanished. Want is in our midst, and Death walks with Want. And when we sit down and ask ourselves with fulness of knowledge: "Why has this evil happened?" the only answer we can give is, because Sir Edward Grey has guided our foreign policy during the past eight years. His short-sightedness and his blunders have brought all this upon us.

. . . . .

I have been reminded of one of those somber judgments which the prophet who lived in evil times uttered against Israel. "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

Aye, what will ye do in the end thereof?

## APPENDIX E

*An Address delivered by J. Ramsay MacDonald to Delegates from the Labor Party in Aberavon Constituency at a Conference at the Dockers' Hall, Port Talbot, November 13th, 1920.*

It was suggested to me some time ago that after the work that has been done during the past few months, it would be advisable for me to meet those of you who are active in the various districts in the constituency. And needless to say I sprang to the suggestion with the greatest alacrity.

I congratulate you all on the excellent advance you have made in the organization. Ivor Thomas tells me very frequently how you are getting on, and I am sure you will all join with me in congratulating Miss Pallister on the strenuous and unstinted service she is giving to the Division and to the whole of the Labor Movement in speeding up this machine of organization which we hope to get into tip-top form before we finish with it. I hope that by the time an election comes round the Labor Party in the Aberavon Division will be one of the most efficient machines in the whole country.

But it is not enough to have the best machine unless you have also the right spirit, and I should like to see in this Division not only a fine machine with secretaries, agents and committees from one end of the constituency to the other, but I should also like to see here the finest body of men and women in the Labor Movement. For, after all, the Labor Movement is nothing except for the quality of the men and women who compose it. We are not out merely to get votes; we are out for having a very fine type of mind and character. I should like to see it that in every workshop the manager may say, "He is a perfectly honest fellow; we can trust him; he belongs to the Labor Party." It is a fair test of our success how far we get the social spirit into our men and women. We are out to improve the race and to lift the mass, and we cannot do that until we have men and women working on the lifting job. Good men and good women are the foundation, the spirit and the inspiration of the Labor Movement.

It is not enough, however, that we should have the right spirit; we



must also have the right ideas; we must know what we are striving for. It is not enough that we should say, "Lord, Lord." Ideals will not get us into the Kingdom of Heaven. We must know exactly where we are walking. Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress* was beset by all sorts of queer enticements like Vanity Fair. We may be similarly beset, but by exercising our reflective qualities upon problems, upon principles and proposals, we can stand secure against all sorts of worldly, foolish and erroneous notions set up for our confusion to lead us astray.

I have been away since I last saw you, and I have wandered far. I have wandered far in my time, and I can see how much the world has changed within the last five years. I have seen it with my own eyes as plainly as you see your own streets. The other day as I came through in the Orient Express from Constantinople to Paris, from Turkey, across Greece, Bulgaria, Jugo-Slavia, Italy, Switzerland, France, I could see the new world in the damaged villages, I could see the change in the aspect of the people, and could see that a great tragedy had been acted there.

And it was the same when you talked to the people. I talked to some five or six of the principal public men in Europe at the present time, and the impression I bring back is this, that the tragedy is still lying heavily over Europe. I have brought back also another impression—that that tragedy will not be removed until British Labor is wise enough, sane enough and loyal enough to itself, to return a body of men to the House of Commons that, knowing the problems of Europe, knowing how to meet them, will be strong enough, whether they are in power or in opposition, to influence Government policy.

What was it that we put before ourselves when we entered the war? You who went out, why did you go out? It was not a fight for finance. It was not merely to drive the Kaiser an exile into Holland. You went out because you believed that certain great changes were required in Europe which would establish the things that belonged to the moral and not merely to the superficial requirements of society. You had ideals. You believed you were going to end militarism. You Welshmen are happy in your Welsh culture; you cherish the same ideals and have generally the same outlook on life. You understand the iniquity of those who would add to an alien government people of foreign culture and people of foreign historical tradition, people who do not want to be subject, but to live under their own self-government. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, peoples,

race after race, tradition after tradition, had been compelled to accept the same government. They were unhappy—that was one of the main causes of the war. If, for instance, Germany had come out victorious and tried to annex Wales and destroy your traditions, even the most pacific of you would rise in revolt. I saw that evil done in Europe.

You fought in order to destroy militarism, but if nations put themselves in danger they must protect themselves. If we have any nation, be it Germany, Russia, or Austria, flaunting its sword in the eyes of the world, it has got to keep that sword burnished and sharp, as the other nations of the earth will compel it to use that sword. You said that with this war we were going to end militarism, and were going to establish democracy, freedom and justice. It might mean sacrifice, but you went out to create a condition of things which would enable nations to meet together just as neighbors. You wanted to readjust boundaries so that people would be self-governing; you wanted to change the map of Europe and establish a new state of things, and you fought for victory to enable you to do this justice. You wanted to end war, and there was no cry more popular than "the war to end war!"

We warned you, and we were very unpopular then. We warned you that it was not merely victory that would enable you to do that, but the right spirit. We were misrepresented. The soldiers and statesmen were going to clear out the militarists and to make the Kaisers bite the dust, and to haul down the black flags all over the world, and no other thoughts were wanted. Passions were enflamed—and remember that those who remain at home seated by their comfortable fenders see things redder than those who go through hell on the battlefield. We insisted in saying that the soldier can die and give up his life and win the war, but the cause for which he fought might be defeated unless statesmen were wise.

In 1914 the democracies were out to do moral justice, but in 1918 we see imposed the peace of the victor. The national boundaries which have been set up are artificial, and in going across Europe and visiting the new States which we have created, you find Germans, Magyars, Poles, Turks, all cut off in sections and united to governments they hate.

In Greece, Poland, Rumania, Italy, Jugo-Slavia, Czecho-Slovakia, you find this mixture. In every one of these new States you have sections of one nationality scowling at those of another, and up backstairs

you will find the agents of other Powers receiving the homage of the injured races, and bidding them nurse rebellion in their hearts. You even find international Socialists who bear allegiance more to the Third than to the Second International, prepared to put their Socialism on one side until the question of their political allegiance is settled. Down in your Welsh valleys, with all your troubles and with all your unrest, you are at peace compared with this. It is when you go away there and come into personal contact with these people that you see how terribly unjust, how abominably unjust, it all is. It is then that you see how much militarism has meant in the settlement of Europe and how much it is still being used in Europe.

Last Thursday there was a solemn pageant in London, and I am perfectly certain that the heart of the nation was full of sadness and its eyes of tears. And I wondered if in those moments of eloquent silence that the most eloquent tongue could do nothing but jar—I wondered if the ears of our statesmen heard, as we used to hear in the far distance, the dull roar of the guns in Flanders, if they heard any voice from Ireland, any voice from Central Europe, any voice from the East, or any voice from the dead. I wondered if their imagination was so fine that it could hear from the dead the doom: "You have betrayed us." They have betrayed our dead in the European settlement, and there is to be no peace in consequence of what they have done.

The great things for which you went to war have not been done. You have got new States that are militarist: there are more people under foreign yokes to-day than when war broke out. That is an extraordinary statement to make, but still it is true. More people have been put under a political yoke that compels them to be restive than there were in 1913-14.

The punishments we are inflicting are nothing but the blows of blind passion rather than the edicts of outraged reason and conscience. We have to punish within the limits that God allows us to punish. Our powers of punishment are limited. You may, for instance, punish Russia, as you are now trying to do. But the effect will be felt by the poor woman in Port Talbot or Aberavon who is struggling to make ends meet on a wage which has gone up in figures but has decreased in value on account of the Russian policy of some gentlemen who dabble in high politics in Whitehall. It is quite easy for the £5,000 a year men in Whitehall to punish blindly, but it is well to be aware of the fact that much of these punishments fall not only upon our enemies but upon

ourselves. The essence of punishment is that it can be reasonably borne, that it falls accurately on the guilty, and that it is such moral, political and even economic burdens that bring home to the heart of the punished a sense of his guilt, and the essence of punishment is that it should be accepted as just by the person that is punished. You punish me for a crime and overdo it. Then I shall be blind to my crime and will only know the iron of your injustice. But if you punish me fairly you fill me with a sense of reforming shame. You have got to understand how to do these things. And the politician who claims that he alone really knows what government means, and that he alone can govern, should know these things. This is especially important if he is the representative of a people who hold, as we do, a quarter of this globe.

From Downing Street and the five or six offices around Whitehall that deal with the Colonies and the Empire, this country has a responsibility for more than a quarter of the population of the globe, and yet so many of you are so careless in your choice of those who are directly responsible for the work of this country that you allow thoughtless passion and flashy emotions to decide your politics. Social service is becoming the most technical job in the world. The miner cannot get an increase of 6d. in his wages without starting a tremendously complicated machine, and when the effect is reached he often discovers that he has not got an increase but a decrease. Those of you who do social work very often find that two and two don't make four but perhaps only one and a half! Thus you will realize how necessary it is that the very best men should be elected to public office, the men with the fullest knowledge and the ripest experience, where the industrial population is so strong and political opinion so robust as in this constituency.

That is a survey of the foreign situation. You have solved nothing. You are where you were in 1914. You have created more armies, you are spending more money on militarism. You yourselves have a bigger army, and the non-militarist producer is not so numerous relatively as in 1914. It is true that you have reduced the German army, but you have increased the Polish army. You have reduced the Austrian army, but you have not reduced the Hungarian army. Czecho-Slovakia, Jugoslavia and Italy have larger armies than in 1914. France has reestablished her conscription and maintains great armies of occupation. Worse than all, you have brought the black, yellow and brown man to police the white races. There is no man with a more open mind on the question of the colored races than I, but when I saw in Constantinople



troop after troop of burnished copper-faced men being marched by non-commissioned officers through the districts where the *maisons tolerees* were, I felt that we had come to the stage of degradation which was only equaled by Rome when it crumbled on account of its moral rottenness. I saw that with my own eyes, and returned the next day to make certain I had made no mistake. I saw French and British colored troops led up in bands to these dens of vice, and British and French military police were at each corner-ends of the street. And this is our civilization? No, my friends, it is not our civilization.

If the Welsh women, if the poor women who have been weeping for their dead sons, could only be taken to see what the effect of it all has been, I do not know what they would do. It is perhaps providential that they have not seen. It is far better for you to dream your dreams in your Welsh valleys than to see the realities in Constantinople and the Dardanelles. It is these things which are going to break you down—unless you insist upon a change of policy.

(Mr. MacDonald here mentioned the great respect some of the nations had for Britain, and referred to a conversation he had had with a member of a European Cabinet in which great faith was expressed in this country solely because Labor was still a strong force in the life of the nation.)

We can only reestablish confidence by carrying out our Labor policy, and confidence at home and abroad is the chief thing now to be striven for. In international affairs I stand, where the whole of the Labor Party stands, for self-determination, resettlement of boundaries by justice, and the immediate restoration of trading exchanges, the creation of a real League of Nations.

In home affairs I apply the same principles as guide me in foreign policy. The problems of the world are really one. Circumstances differ, but principles are the same. For instance, one makes an appeal to you in Wales different to that made to the people of London. In Wales the appeal is to a much richer, a much deeper mind than what we find in men huddled together in towns. You have an outlook far more comprehensive—I do not mean in your intelligence, but in your being—than those who are the children of generations that have spent their lives in manufacturing towns.

I must refer first to Ireland, for it is becoming a question which is unique and occupies a category of its own. It is no longer a question of Unionism or Nationalism or anything of the kind. I met the other day

one of the most bitter Unionists of the South of Ireland, a man who twelve months ago regarded Sir Edward Carson as if he were almost incarnate God. It has all gone. He now says he is in favor of an Irish Republic, and no man living in the midst of the trouble in Ireland can come to any other conclusion. So far as I am concerned, my view is that we can no longer say we have any chance of governing Ireland. That has gone. We may regret it or we may not, but as honest men and honest women we must see the fact staring us in the face. Having driven our "Black and Tans" from one end of Ireland to another, there is no further hope for us. We succeed in our immediate object only by demonstrating our failure to win the loyalty of Ireland. It may be that Mr. Lloyd George is perfectly right, and that retaliation is his only possible method of handling the situation. We can give him all the credit that he asks for, but his policy only means that we cannot govern Ireland.

I am not going to waste time and words with the person who tells me that Sinn Feiners have murdered policemen, that we cannot catch them, that the public hide the criminals, so we had to enlist men here at a pound a day and take them to Ireland, instruct them in burning houses, and turn them loose with loaded rifles so that innocent women might be shot by mistake. For if that is true it is a confession that we have driven away any hope there was of governing Ireland. Every day the breach widens between us. Every day there are torrential floods of hate, not between persons and persons, but between nation and nation, between us and Ireland. Every day shows the impossibility of going on in the way we have been going. So, I say, Ireland should be allowed to choose its own form of government. "How?" asks Mr. Lloyd George. "Would you like her to have a republic?" He assumes in his question that a peaceful England is in peaceful relations with Ireland, and hides what is the real alternative to our proposals, which may end in an Irish Republic. Are you going to choose a "Black and Tan" régime or a republic? That is the way in which he ought to put his question. Are you going to choose an Irish policy which within the life of this generation is tolerably certain to put you in conflict with the United States? Are you going to choose an Irish policy which is certain to lower permanently your authority in Europe? Are you to brutalize the reputation of this country in the mind of the world so that it appears to be nothing but a massive, armed, conquering State, under whose shadow no small nation can feel secure? If the League of Nations ever comes

to be a really working, independent-minded League, our country will not be allowed without effective protest to govern Ireland as it is now doing.

Mr. Lloyd George argues that an independent Irish Republic would have harbors that would be bases for enemy submarines; but a "Black and Tan" Ireland is going to bring us into war. Go on with the Coalition policy and you end in war, but give the Irish self-government and you have nine chances out of ten that the country will remain at peace. But are we to assume that our country has been brought to this terrible condition that it must always trust in arms for its safety? Have we not fought to end wars? Is there no League of Nations? Must military fears always dominate our policy and thwart us in doing justice? If we get a peaceful Ireland it will be one of the most essential elements in the peaceful development of this country. When you are asked, "Are you in favor of an Irish Republic?" just remind your questioner what he is in favor of, if he does not know it. He must be in favor of murder, of war, of militarism, of brutalizing his country, of wrecking its reputation. Take the two alternatives, and, if wise, you will accept the one with the least risk for your own security and good name and for the peace of the world. The Labor Party alone can preserve our honor and bring good-will between Ireland and ourselves.

When you get a Government which came into office as this Government came, you cannot have moral authority. Democracy does not mean that we are governed by majorities only. We never have and we never shall be. We cannot be governed by majorities unless they have moral authority. You will never turn the wrong into right by saying that twenty voted for the wrong and five for the right. Only if the Government machine is run with uprightness and with a sense of responsibility is it fair that the majorities should say to the minorities, "You must appeal to the electors until such time as you can turn yourselves into a majority." The principle is a rational one, the principle of a change of mind, a change in outlook, a new revelation, or, I would use the old word so often associated with religion but in a wider sense, "conversion." Parliament can have no authority when it has been elected by fraud.

We are suffering from lack of confidence in Parliament, because we feel that we have been cheated, as the miners felt that Mr. Bonar Law cheated them (as he did) over the Sankey Commission. So to-day,

when we face unemployment, profiteering, legislative attacks upon Trade Unionism, you rightly feel that there is a widespread conspiracy to enchain labor again, to deprive it of the power it requires for its own protection—power which for generations it has had to use for that protection. Both the great cries that won the last election have been abandoned, Ministers speak falsely to the country and Parliament, the promises made to ex-service men have not been kept, housing has been muddled, and the new world will have to inhabit jerry-built homes, the interests of exploiting capital never had a Government more abjectly at their beck and call than now. That is at the source of unrest, of lowered production, of strikes. That, unless ended, will produce revolution.

I wish I could offer you a quick-change policy, but there is none. You must educate, you must win over the sinner who is still in darkness and is worshipping false gods. You have to convert men and women; you must, above all, create a strong, manly spirit in the people. It must not be assumed that the woman who goes about in her motor-car is better than the workman's wife who goes about with holes in her stockings. She may be. If she is it must be because she has internal qualities. Nor must you think of the inferiority of Labor. You think, for instance, of a miner. Now there is no such man as an independent miner. The miner is only a small part of the whole pattern of society. You must fit him in with the carpenter, the engineer, the steel-smelter. The complete picture is all these working together and cooperating, and in that co-operation they become citizens equal in honor, in utility, in respect. This generation is one of unrest because miners and dockers are insisting upon being regarded as men, and society is not willing to grant the recognition. Society is a sort of jig-saw puzzle, and it is the Labor Party that is going to fit it in aright. We can do this much better than those who have gone before. We are older than the oldest of our forefathers, and the great schoolmaster has been abroad. No workman in mine and factory goes through the same operations as fifty years ago and he is beginning to understand the system under which he lives. There is nothing more explosive than the human intelligence, and instead of regretting that young fellows between eighteen and thirty are in revolt and are forcing into activity the Labor Party in all its sections, I am inclined to say: "God's in His heaven, All's right with the world." The pattern of society we have in mind must be more perfect, more



beautiful and more harmonious in its colors and relationship than any that has gone before. It would ill become us were it not. We must learn from what the nation has gone through.

Now, these ideas, applied to industrial conditions, may be best studied in the demand for nationalization. I am not going to quarrel about words. What I mean by nationalization is that there will be organized control of industry by the workman by brain and by hand, that the whole production will be organized in the interest of the community, not organized in the interest of Capital. Nationalization brings into production not the muscle only, but the mind and the whole moral nature of the man. When you are paid wages which you think are inadequate, what business has any one to ask you to produce with unlimited effort. Limited wages mean limited effort. You may develop in some individuals an angelic temperament so that they will say, "I don't care if my wages are only 10d. an hour, I am going to produce as much as I can." But you will never have all society doing this. You must have either division with selfishness or unity with whole-heartedness. You cannot have peace while you have men whose wages are inadequate and know it. It is only when you get complete socialization or nationalization that the moral appeal comes in, for the producer is then a cooperator with the whole community, and any shirking of labor will be a social crime. Only under nationalization can we have men producing by heart as well as by muscle. Nationalization or socialization of industry will put moral effort on a new basis.

To-night I am not troubling much about a program, and I do not deal with the details of a housing scheme, a land scheme, conscription of wealth and such things. The important thing is: What is a man's outlook? What is his spirit? Where are his sympathies? Given those things right, then programs can be taken for granted. I have come from the workers—the poorest of them; nothing has ever been alluring enough to attract me to side with their enemies.

I often think of the verse—

"Oh, sometimes glimpses on my sight,  
Through present wrong, the eternal right;  
And step by step since Time began  
I see the steady gain of man."

When I can say that from my heart I think of the Labor Movement and of the I.L.P., of those glorious past years of fight, past years when, although beaten down on our hands and knees, and almost broken, we

were never defeated, past years which bore to us the trophies of victory as well as the wounds of battle. Standing to-day in the midst of this Europe and with the consciousness of its tragedy in my heart, I still repeat that verse and believe it, because there are men and women, like yourselves, thinking, working and organizing, believing fine things and dreaming noble dreams, and determined that, in so far as you can, you are going to embody them in the practical government of this country.

## APPENDIX F

### LABOR'S POLICY VERSUS PROTECTION

*Opening Speech of Labor Campaign in the Protectionist Election of 1923. Delivered by J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., leader of the Opposition, before a gathering of members of Trade Union Congress General Council, National Executive of Labor Party, Labor M.P.'s and candidates at Hotel Belgravia, London, on November 1st, 1923.*

THERE was great pleasure in being away, but apparently you have conspired to give me still greater pleasure in coming back. Your hospitality and kindly welcome have been very touching indeed. I have no illusions about the coming session. I shall do my best to work to the very utmost of my strength, and the only thing I ask you to do is to follow my good example.

While I have been away several important things, and one very touching thing, have happened. The last is the death of the late Prime Minister, Mr. Bonar Law. I am sure I am speaking for my colleagues when I say that during the time we have known him we have learnt that there is something more important as a bond between man and man than political opinions.

I myself have never sat on the same side of the House as Mr. Bonar Law. I cannot remember a single great question on which I agreed with him. I remember how in his younger days he often used to make us angry, but his personality was enriched by sorrow, and the strange feeling grew up that he was somehow winding himself round our hearts.

We felt him to be the type of the man who in singleness of heart and purity of purpose was spending himself at the call of public duty.

The memory that we have of him will always, I think, make it impossible for us to crush out human charity by political divisions, and make it impossible to men who are called to the House of Commons to decline to perform their duty because their hearts are heavy and their burdens are anything but light.

The most interesting thing that has happened since I was here is the change in the battle tactics of Mr. Baldwin.

I am not quite sure yet what the change amounts to. I am not sure how far he has consulted his Cabinet; but if he has consulted them fully, then, judging by what some of his colleagues have said since he delivered his speech at Plymouth, they could not have been listening to him when he expounded his views on the Protection issue, which is so dear to his heart.

If we challenge him, he is prepared to go to the country. He is prepared to plunge the country into a General Election if he is challenged by the Opposition that he is exceeding the pledge given by Mr. Bonar Law!

How far is this the Cabinet policy, and how far is the Cabinet united upon it? Moreover, when he flew out this flag did he haul it right up to the mast top, or is it only half-mast high?

Is it really Protection out and out, or is it a sort of selection of the points of Protection carefully culled from the complete doctrine, not so much for the purpose of saving the country as for giving the Tory Party an electioneering cry at an early opportunity?

I should also like to know whether we really have to believe what he says when he tells us that, having declared what he is going to stand for, he is now to enquire into the reason why he is standing for it.

I understand he is going to appoint a Cabinet Committee to consider whether Protection is sound or unsound.

Mr. Jack Jones: It is all sound.

I find (commented Mr. MacDonald) that my dear old friend Jack Jones has not lost his cunning.

Well, I think that the country ought to be told more of these things by Mr. Baldwin when he goes to Manchester, or at some other convenient time. I suppose we must take it seriously.

He told us these revelations have come to him as the result of contemplating the terrible problem of unemployment.

Well, I am glad to hear it. I am glad to have the assurance that the heart of the Tory Party is touched by the suffering and by the trials through which thousands and thousands of our friends—my friends and your friends—have been passing during the last three or four years.

There is far too little human sympathy in politics and far too much partisan maneuvering.

For three years we have had critical unemployment, massive un-



employment, exceptional unemployment. It has not been the usual old-fashioned unemployment of 2 per cent,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, or 3 per cent. There have been millions unemployed, millions partly employed, and during all that time the great revelation of Protection has never been vouchsafed to the eyes and hearts of the Tory Party.

When Mr. Bonar Law led his party at the last General Election, two years after the state of things had been revealed to every man who had eyes to see and a heart to feel, he gave, with simple-minded sincerity, a pledge that he was going to settle the question of unemployment, and our industrial difficulties, but not by Protection, because he was convinced that he could do it without.

That is not all. On August 14th, the Prime Minister wrote a famous letter to Sir Allan Smith, who had at last seen that the Government's policy was shilly-shallying, was incompetent, ineffective, not business-like, wasteful, bad for employers and bad for employed, bad for the country and for everybody concerned.

Mr. Baldwin in this letter defended the position of the Government, and explained how it was going to deal with the problem, but never by hint or word did he indicate that Protection was in the back of his mind, and that he would in the end have to resort to Protection.

Year after year Mr. Clynes and Mr. Henderson, when I was not in Parliament, said that the Government programs for dealing with unemployment were inadequate, and pressed and pressed for more.

It was only because of pressure that they had got the programs extended.

Last year, as soon as Sir Montague Barlow had sat down, I asked him how many men would be affected. The reply was, "I can't tell you." I pressed him again, and found that he was instructed not to reply.

The Government have spent another twelve months thinking, planning, constructing their schemes, trying to find money by pressure on the local authorities, and now it is November, and we have asked again how many men are to be employed, and the answer is, "We will tell you in a few days' time, when Parliament meets, if the figures are ready." The way they have dealt with the unemployment problem is a scandal and disgrace to any one who pretends to be aware of its seriousness.

The problem is not merely one of economic wastage. It is not only that decent, honest men are walking the streets, that households are being pinched, that women and children are being starved. During

these three or four years thousands and thousands of young people have been leaving our schools, who in the ordinary way would have gone into industry to be trained. What have been their workshops, their training grounds? The streets of our towns. To-day thousands of those boys and girls have been three years out of employment, and have had no more training than my shoe to fit them to earn a living when they get the chance.

We warned the Government of that. We told them they must not close the educational institutions that had been started to give a practical training during the time they could not go into the factories, but there was a great economy stunt by rich men, materialistically-minded men, who cared more for a gilded shilling than for human souls. Those schools were closed, so that they could say they had saved so many thousand pounds.

That is not all. We are now told that not only is the supply of skilled workers not being kept up, but we are even failing to keep those we have. They are going away, so that if we could have normal production to-morrow it would be difficult to restart it for want of the skilled labor on which we depended so much in days gone by.

I should like to ask the Dominion Prime Ministers: Will you take our unskilled as well as our skilled, our incompetent as well as our competent? Do those people who suggest emigration as a cure for our illness say that they will take a bunch of emigrants representing our population and including its proportions of inefficient and semi-skilled? If they did that they might be assisting us, but if they say, "We will take only your skilled, only your best and your most promising," then instead of being a very great help to us, it is a means by which our power as an industrial nation will be weakened by every draft that leaves our shores.

We have warned the Government, and it has been deaf to our warnings, and now it has to begin at the end of the third year where it began at the first. I am a little bit skeptical when I read eloquent expressions of concern about unemployment after these three dreadful years have passed over our heads.

Mr. Baldwin is like some of our dear friends who, in face of industrial problems, cannot see any way out, and then call for a General Strike.

He has tried every way of tinkering with this problem. He sees that every year it is getting more difficult. He has tried Unemployment Insurance, putting the cost mainly on the employed, so far as the

three contributing sections are concerned. When they reel off their great figures—£50,000,000 it is—they forget to tell you that the Government contributes a mere quota, and that out of the three contributing parties, it is the working man himself who bears the heaviest burden.

They have gone to the local authorities, and said, "We will compel you to be extravagant locally so that we may be economical nationally. We will make you increase your rates that we may say we are dealing with unemployment."

And now, Mr. Baldwin, like those friends of ours whom I have just mentioned, says, "Let us cut the painter and try Protection."

Protection is not a cure, it is a diversion—a magnificent method of side-tracking a great movement. Under it you will, of course, have again bribery, corruption and log-rolling. We know what happened in the House under the Safeguarding of Industries Act; I have never known such lobbying. All this will be going on while the poor simple-minded working man drifts hither and thither, and now and then an industry will be spurred up by Protection, and they will say the millennium has come.

When we last fought this cry of Protection, it was fought on negative issues. We propose to do that no more.

The fight we are in now is not Protection versus Free Trade: the fight we are in now is Protection versus the Labor program.

I am not sure that during the whole of the contest I shall be called upon to utter the words "Free Trade." Protection and Free Trade are both conditions of industry. You can value them out.

Under Protection you have a certain distribution of industry and industrial population, certain tendencies to make prices high, coordinate industry and create monopolies. Under Free Trade, too, you have certain tendencies, and, on the whole, I am in favor of the open market. But that is not the issue now.

Supposing we had Protection, we should still have our unemployed, our land monopoly, our starvation in education. We should still have economies practised by rich men, who care more for coins than human souls.

We should still have all the problems which center around the Labor Movement, and for the solution for which the Labor Movement stands, and will continue to stand, in spite of red herrings drawn across the path.

So we put up the Labor policy against Protection.

The Labor Party is still powerful upon the platform, and the Labor Party will use the platform during the coming months to explain the full details of its position. To-day I can only briefly sketch where we stand and what is in our minds.

Our unemployment to-day is of two kinds. First, there is the normal unemployment, which is created by the system under which we are living, and which will be with us whether in good trade or in bad trade, as long as that system remains. So far as that is concerned, we have our policy.

There is not a single nation in the world which is running its industry under Protectionist conditions which has not got precisely that problem of the normal unemployed. Protection never has solved that, and never will.

Then there is the present abnormal unemployment. What about that? Does Mr. Baldwin mean to tell us that Protection is going to do anything except increase the difficulties which have made that abnormal unemployment?

I have seen it with my own eyes while I have been away. I have noticed the absence of British cargoes on the ships and British goods in the warehouses, and the reply to my questions has been: "We cannot buy British goods. Your unemployment is caused because you have no export trade. You are not sending your goods abroad because other nations are sending their goods into our markets at rates which you cannot touch. Your problem is how to reduce your costs of production."

Now apply Protection to that. Everybody who is advocating Protection—even Protection in that rather mild and apologetic form the Safeguarding of Industries Act—has said: "Of course, the operation of this law increases the cost of production."

It is because our costs of production are already higher than those of France, Italy and Germany that we cannot get into the markets that are supplied from Constantinople, and now it is proposed that we should make those costs higher still. How that would help us I don't know, and I don't suppose Mr. Baldwin does.

I have used the language employed to me and have said "costs of production." That is how it appears to the purchaser, but it is not an accurate description. The evil is the condition of international exchange.

This is the result of the continued chaos in Europe. I say delib-



erately that since the Armistice whole packs of careering hounds of lust, of vanity, of hate, of fear, and of temper have been let loose upon Europe.

Whatever may be the end of it, our children will have to read how feeble was Britain when she should have been strong, how uncertain she was when she should have been courageous, and how her plainest interests were sacrificed by France without so much as a "By-your-leave."

The economics of Reparations are perfectly well understood by every business man who is acquainted with the mechanism of trade, but the matter has never been honestly put before our people. With all this talk about income from Reparations and punishment of Germany, Britain is like the dog that was given a piece cut off its own tail, and told to be satisfied with that. Every attempt to get Reparations has injured us politically or industrially, and has been a prolific cause of unemployment.

The Labor Party has always taken up a perfectly straightforward position on this question, and the European Governments will, in the end, find peace by following the policy laid down by the Labor Party three or four years ago. The problem is not merely what Germany can pay, but how we can receive Germany's payments.

Are we going to say on false reasoning and false sentiment that Germany must pay Reparations although the result be to doom millions of our men to stand idle in the streets? We are not such fools as to advise anything like that. Instead of uttering parrot-like denunciations of enemy States, let us take down a simple volume of political economy, study it carefully and learn that no nation can receive Reparations from another except at the cost of losing its own foreign markets to that other. If Germany is to pay, she must have an unnatural excess of exports over imports.

It is like holding out your hand to receive a payment while the person who is paying you has one hand in your pocket and is taking out not only as much as he is giving you, but a certain percentage added.

General Smuts has made a speech of manly vigor. His words were worthy of a Prime Minister of a British self-governing Dominion. He has reinforced the position of the Labor Party. Our weak acquiescence in the crimes and follies of Europe must end, and only when it ends will a certain part at any rate of our unemployment come to an end.

Imports, such as are called dumping, are made possible by the state of the exchanges. Does any man mean to tell me that these exchanges,

fluctuating from day to day, elusive as a blob of mercury, can be counteracted by a tariff? If you put 33 per cent, 70 per cent or 150 per cent, on your imports, you could not deal with such a situation. If 33 per cent was adequate in January, how much will be required in February? Tariffs must have some definite scientific relationship to a well-defined object, and if that relationship is impossible, then the tariff is of no use at all. If tariffs could cope with this situation, the Safeguarding of Industries Act would have done it, for every claim under that Act is dealt with on its merits, but now Mr. Baldwin says the Safeguarding of Industries Act is not sufficient. If it is not, then no tariff in the world would be anything but inadequate and bungling.

I should favor a proper inquiry into the results of the Safeguarding of Industries Act. I don't want people who have benefited to be the only witnesses. We don't pass legislation to deal with little sections. We don't examine somebody's ledger and say, "Here is a balance of £500 to the bad: we will pass legislation to make it £1000 to the good."

I would be almost prepared to wager that it would be found that the Safeguarding of Industries Act has had no good influence on trade, but a very bad influence for the consumers who have been affected by it.

Our positive proposals are for the settlement of European difficulties, the declaration of a firm, courageous and moral British policy that will make certain nations of Europe ashamed of themselves. We have not passed beyond the moral stage yet.

I am glad to say that, as a result of talking with all sorts of people of five nations, I have found that there is a sort of sneaking feeling of shame over the part that some have taken, and I feel sure that a great commanding nation, speaking not as to enemies, but with a desire to cooperate, with healing in its tone and reconstruction in its message, would be received as gladly as the earth after a severe winter receives the blessing of spring.

When this exceptional unemployment goes, we shall find that the old Britain has not come back. We shall have to face very difficult conditions; but again the Labor policy is quite clear. We have to develop our own country. "Protect our home market!" What an insignificant phrase that is alongside of the Labor Party's policy: Develop our own country!

I wish, my friends, I could meet you oftener on tramp. I could take

you into the open fields of any county, or stand with you on any hill-top and, pointing to the wastes, say, "There is our case!"

Before I went abroad, I was looking at the home market. What did I find? I found evidence of plowshares under the heather, foundations of ruined houses masked by broom and whin; villages where thousands of decent men of grand physique and magnificent character had been brought up, and which now are deserted—only a few cows and sheep, and beyond them silence. That is our case. I went into Dorset, and found more rabbits and pheasants than ears of wheat. The farmers were complaining and saying that they could not increase wages, but some of them were spending their days with the hounds. I am not against any man's recreation. I wish there were more of it, but that is not the spirit in which to face our national problems. And so, if I were to describe our ideal in a phrase, I should say this:

We are going to develop our own country, we are going to work it for all it is worth, to bring human labor into touch with God's natural endowments, and we are going to make the land blossom like a rose and contain houses and firesides where there shall be happiness and contentment and glorious aspirations.

For immediate purposes of relief we are going to press for the re-opening of those training schools, and for the building of houses and the making of proper roads and other works of public utility on plans carefully devised. It is not our way to wait till August and then say we are thinking about it, or make statements like that which drew from my friend Clynes a certain very well argued letter. Mr. Clynes felt it necessary to say to the Minister of Labor, "What do your fine words mean?" The Minister replies, "They mean something"—and we have not got much further than that.

We were told in 1915 that the Government had actually set aside a great official and given him the assistance of experts, and that they had a book in which they were registering all the schemes by which the unemployed could be dealt with after the war. They issued twopenny pamphlets on Reconstruction—I have got some of them still. And then, when they were faced with the actual conditions, they were not prepared.

We are prepared. We have been prepared all along, if the country had only had the graciousness to give us a chance.

There is the question of national expenditure. It is thoroughly unscientific at the present time, as unproductive as it possibly could be. We are saving on human efficiency, stunting our people in order to balance our Budget on something like £900,000,000 per annum. The Government say to the income-tax payer, "We will relieve you, because you can make a clamor." But to the great mass of the people they say, "We will close the schools to your children, or give them an inferior type of teacher, and bring your children down to a lower intellectual and physical level of efficiency." Did you ever hear a more ignorant, absurd, muddle-headed statement on the social problem than that? They lower the income-tax, as if that was the only way to help industry, and they leave the indirect taxation which substantially increases the cost of living, and diminishes the consumption that gives employment.

We have in the Budget a proportion of deadweight—a payment on debt—so great that if a company were running on those lines it would go bankrupt in five or six months. We propose a Capital Levy to pay off a substantial portion of the debt. More than half our taxation goes in payment on the debt. We cannot spend that on education and public health too. We want to ease the burden of debt by paying it off. I have always been taught that an honest man paid his debts. We want to combine moral rectitude with economic wisdom. That combination says, "Pay off your debt as much as you can, and the way to pay it is not by a sinking fund but by a Capital Levy." And then everybody says, "What a dishonest set of confiscators!"

The proposal of a Capital Levy presents no practical difficulties that have not been overcome in the levying of the Death Duties. When it was proposed to make a levy on war wealth, the officials said: "It can be done, and we are prepared to do it." Our finance will depend on reduction of debt by levying the amount required upon those who have benefited most from the debt. It can only be done once, and only for the purpose of reducing debt, not for current expenses. You can, in business, use capital for the purpose of paying off debt; you cannot use capital for paying current expenses, because that means bankruptcy. Now it must be remembered that the National Debt is really an individual debt charged against every one taxed to pay interest upon it. Therefore, when people imagine that but for taxation they would have larger incomes, and at the same time refuse to pay the debt which necessitates the taxation, their minds are muddled.



Our proposal to levy capital never was maintained as anything but a process to reduce the debt so that our Budgets may contain a larger proportion of fructifying expenditure than they do now.

We have come to the time when we must make a complete survey of our national conditions. I hear our opponents saying, with a sort of pride, "You can't live except on what has been produced." I reply, "Who said the contrary?" That has been our doctrine since long before it was theirs. I remember Smillie and other friends of ours many years ago quoting Scripture, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." You can only live on production—your own, or somebody else's.

The problem of production is the problem of the willing producer. You cannot take a collier by the scruff of the neck, push him along to the coalface, put a pick in his hand and say: "Go ahead and produce coal." That is where our policy of nationalization comes in. Mr. Baldwin said a very true thing when he stated that the problem of production was to be solved by organization and management. I would have said something more, but we will take that. What of the organization of the coal industry, an industry that cannot be touched by Protection? There has never been a report from a representative committee on the coal industry that has not condemned, more or less strongly, the present system. They have not been able to get one to report that the state of the trade is satisfactory, and that it can give good wages to the miners and satisfaction to the consumers; and the reason is that the industry is disorganized by private enterprise. We may give Mr. Baldwin a third chance to put the Sankey Report into operation, and if he does so, then in the coal trade we shall have gone far to solve the problem of the willing producer. Nationalization is the only solution of the problem of how to organize coal production and coal supplies.

Capitalism has very nearly ruined this country. Capitalism from the Industrial Revolution created such a condition of things that there would have been no third generation of workers. Women were becoming barren and children stunted. The reputation of the great industrial saints of the last century was gained, not by backing up the anarchy of private enterprise, but by condemning it. Shaftesbury, Carlyle, Ruskin, Robert Owen—you cannot point to one of those saints who rose above the level of their time without pointing to a pioneer of Socialism. What they taught has since been developed.

We must apply our minds to create a fabric of cooperative enterprise, fellowship and exchange, so that if some unemployment is necessary on

account of temporary dislocations it will never produce the terrible consequences that it now does. That is the dreadful idea that you, my friends, Labor members and candidates, are told you are to be beaten upon when you go to the constituencies! That is not going to come off. Educate, educate, educate! And go straight ahead.

In my wanderings I have been in cities that have played a great part in the history of mankind, a great part in the achievement of liberty, a great part in government, and in such a city I always found its spirit embodied in something beautiful and dignified coming from the faith in the hearts of men. We are out for a new building, not merely a town hall, a church, or a temple, but a social structure, a social organization that will embody the beauty and dignity of the faith that we hold.

That is the Socialistic faith that keeps us up and makes us go on, and will keep us going on. The work is not going to be done in a day or in a session of Parliament. We can only lay foundations and educate.

We can only do what public opinion will allow us to do. We can have no shoddy revolutions, no patchwork that looks fine, but will crumble before the workman has left his work. We must have straight, honest craftsmanship that will endure, and only in so far as the Labor Party comes up to these requirements will it be laying the foundations of a State, beautiful, dignified, radiant with faith, and a State that will last, a State worth sacrificing ourselves for, a State which we can hand over to our children with pride and comfort in our hearts.

## APPENDIX G

*Speech made by J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., at Labor Party's "Victory Demonstration" in celebration of gains in recent General Election, held at the Albert Hall, London, on January 8th, 1924.*

I THINK it is perfectly proper to describe this as a great victory demonstration. We have been in battle, we have brought back the trophies. We went away 144 strong, we came back 192, and amongst the 192 I am very glad and very proud to say we have three women. We have four million and a half electors standing solidly behind us in the country. A very good beginning, not an ending by any means. To-day a new world seems to be opening out before us, and we cannot help thinking of the old one.

Ah, if the scores of people who made this victory possible, and who are no longer with us, had only been blessed to live to this night! How warm would have been their greeting! But you and I, their successors, the heirs of their labor, must cherish with religious zeal the inspiring memories that they have left behind, and guard with all the care that tender human hearts can show the lamp that they lit before the altars of democracy and Socialism.

A sudden change has come upon our outlook. We are on the threshold of Government. We may be called upon within the next few days to take upon our shoulders the responsibility of office. We shall do it. Why? Not because we want it. Has any heir been so foolish as to hasten off the stage of this mortal life a father of his who is going to hand him over a bankrupt estate? If there be such an one he is not to be found in the Labor Party.

Why will we take office? Because we are to shirk no responsibility that comes to us in the course of the evolution of our Movement. There are risks, certainly, risks on every side—risks behind, before us, to the right of us, and to the left of us. Ah, but there is more than risks, there is a call. We have built our final habitations away on the horizon. We are a party of idealists. We are a party that away in the dream-land of imagination dwells in the social organization fairer and more

perfect than any organization that mankind has ever known. That is true, but we are not going to jump there. We are going to walk there. We are upon a pilgrimage, we are on a journey. One step enough for me. One step. Yes, on one condition—that it leads to a next step. If we shirked our responsibilities now we ourselves would be inflicting upon ourselves the defeat that our enemies could not inflict upon us. So we accept our responsibilities.

Now I see that our friends of the Press, having very little knowledge about us, supply the gaps of their ignorance by a very prolific imagination, and are telling you all sorts of stories. They tell you, for instance, that we are just going to take office in order to prepare for a General Election. Nothing of the kind. I give you this guarantee if you want it. We are not going to take office in order to prepare for a General Election. We are going to take office in order to do work.

I will give you another guarantee if you want it. They tell us that we are going in to indulge in some sort of heady, reckless transaction or other which in the end will only add to our confusion and our dislocation. We are going to inherit a bankrupt estate, and they tell us that instead of nourishing that estate, plowing it, harrowing it, sowing it, tending it, encouraging its growth, we are only going to increase its bankruptcy. There is nothing further from the truth than that statement.

If capital flees from this country when we come in it will be the panic-mongers that will be responsible, not the Labor Party. If there is to be unsettlement, if Parliament, metaphorically, is to be blown up, the Guy Fawkes have got their headquarters at Carmelite House—not at 33 Eccleston Square. We take office—if we do, I am the last man to count my chickens before they are hatched, and the chickens are not hatched yet, although the eggs seem to be progressing very normally and in accordance with the natural law of creation—we will take office—if we do, if we have the chance—in order to try and settle manifold and pressing difficulties which beset our nation, Europe and the whole world at the present moment.

My task, and my colleagues' task, is going to be to mobilize all men and women of good will and safe judgment. They tell me to look at figures. Well, I can't help looking at figures, but I am less interested in figures than I am in work. They may have their hundreds and we may only have our fifties, but fifty men and women doing things that appeal to the intelligence of our people are stronger than five thousand



men and women doing things that make no such appeal. They can vote against us, they can pursue their tactics. I don't care.

Candidly and honestly, my friends, I am not thinking about it. We have in our minds, we have in our hearts, proposals, ideas, suggestions which we believe will contribute to peace, and we defy these Liberals and Tories to range themselves against us in that work.

The first great duty we put our hands to is to establish peace and create the conditions of peace. To-day they talk about war being over. Why, there is not a capital city in Europe to-day but is nourishing and cherishing the live embers of the late war. There is not a capital city to-day but contains somewhere embers which a fresh-blowing wind will scatter over the inflammable material in Europe and will start a new war. My colleagues and myself want to go to office with a broad foot and a big heel to stamp upon every one of those embers—so that whether we be six months in office or six years or six decades, there shall not be in any corner of Europe fires which can be fanned into a great flame to involve the Old World in New wars.

The quarrel, if it can be called such, the misunderstandings, the pin-pricks, the irritations going on between France and ourselves are absolutely deplorable. They are unworthy of both countries. They do not issue from the minds of the good people of either countries. It would be a great thing to-day if we could only do it, to put them all behind us; to establish with France, Italy, Russia, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia—all peoples of the nations,—an understanding not of rival military forces, but an understanding of human men and women who have no cause for war, no cause for enmity.

I believe that a Labor Party occupying Downing Street, staffing our Government, is the one thing required to give strength in the morally courageous and power to the peace forces of all sections of Europe. That is our first great task.

In connection with that we shall do our best to complete the structure of the League of Nations, to use it without reserve as the main instrument for securing international justice, and thereby creating the conditions of international peace. The pompous folly of standing aloof from the Russian Government will be ended. Ended not because we agree with what the Russian Government has done. That is not our business. I would like to know when a Liberal or Tory Government in its international relations always drew the line at Governments for whose every act they were prepared to make themselves responsible. I want trade,

I want negotiations, I want a settlement from the coasts of Japan to the coasts of Ireland. If I have to protest against what is being done in Afghanistan, how can I protest unless I have channels to use for my protest?

If I am going to say to these men, if I am going to say to any foreign country, "We are going to deal straight with you, we are going to treat fairly with you," how can that be done if I have got to whisper to somebody behind my back and say: "Go and tell somebody to tell somebody to tell somebody to tell Moscow"? How can you adjudicate or settle our outstanding claims—either the outstanding claims of Russia against us, or our outstanding claims against Russia—how can these things be settled with half a dozen intermediaries carrying things each to each other, and at last getting Moscow into touch with London by a sort of telephonic or telegraphic system that goes round and round the world before the message is delivered?

On that I appeal simply to your common sense. I appeal to your history, I appeal to the habits and practise of your Foreign Office. To that extent we would be no new Government. We would be a Labor Government putting into operation the very principles that have become historical in the operation of your Foreign Office.

Then there is a great question that affects us at home, mixed up inexplicably with foreign affairs, the question of unemployment. I believe myself that every decent-minded man and woman in this country is unhappy about this question. I believe that every decent-minded man and woman would welcome a Government producing a solution for it—a well-thought-out, a scientific scheme for meeting this problem. I believe that the Governments hitherto have failed to do their duty regarding this problem.

We want greater care first of all in understanding what the problem meant. In that we will discover that at the root of it is the lower purchasing power of the mass of the consumers in this land. They have neglected to develop normal trade, as was shown by Sir Alan Smith's letter of protest addressed a few months ago to the Tory Government. They have allowed human material to deteriorate—the child from the school to be put on the streets; men of skill and women of skill coarsened, hardened, stiffened by lack of practise. Ah! my friends, for the first time in the history of this country a Labor Government, a Labor Department, staffed by men of labor experience, and women of labor experience—experience and knowledge, spirit, insight, and

capacity to put themselves in the shoes of the unemployed and the unemployed children, for the first time such an administrative staff will consider the problem of unemployment from the human point of view, and not merely from the wage-earning point of view.

An essential part of that is housing. Again, how can the people, for instance, who live within a stone's-throw of this hall, if they know anything at all, go to bed to-night having said their prayers in sincerity of spirit declaring that God is the Father common to them and to the people of Mile End—how can they, after their religious exercise, go to sleep comfortably whilst men, women, young men and maidens, and children are all huddled together in one room to-night: while there are homes, so called, that have not a cheery and comfortable fireside; whilst young men and women who are just married and in whose minds the glorious glow of love is still undimmed have got to face poverty, deprivation, dirt, sordidness? Ah, my friends, there is no section of the community that ought to rise up with a more flaring moral indignation against our housing conditions than the people who live round hereabouts.

They are not lost. The fact is, they are not touched. I want to touch them. I want them to feel as we feel. I want them to relate their spiritually religious professions with their actual conditions of life. Then in a great effort that we shall make to supply houses nobody will be more loyal behind us than those people who have not experienced the problem themselves, but who in their heart of hearts know what a miserable lot they would be if they were brought up under surroundings such as we want to change.

Moreover, we want to put the human ends of housing in front of the worker, in front of the employer. I want a crusade in which there will be no distinction—a crusade that will give us houses, houses, houses all the time, until we have enough houses to put the people in.

And I want to say here and now that whatever guarantees are required in order to enable a maximum production of houses to be made we are prepared to give them. I am also prepared to do this—and I am sure my colleagues will heartily cheer this,—if we find that trusts, monopolies, corners in any of the essential materials for building are standing in our way we shall break them.

I have no intention of delivering a program speech—nor have I done it. If I had I should have had to deal with the ex-Service men, I should have had to deal with widows, I should have had to deal with

old-age pensioners. But what I have done to-night is this: I have tried to show you the spirit in which the Labor Government, if it comes into being, will carry on its work, and I have used one or two big things as an illustration of how we would apply that spirit.

As I say, I am not thinking of Party. I am thinking of national well-being. I want a Labor Government to repair the damage that has been done since 1914 to the homes, minds, the education, and the politics of our people. I want to encourage promising growths, making for peace, for happiness, and for contentment in the world. Human beings cannot be content whilst they are suffering injustice, and the man who declares for contentment declares for everything. He knows what he means.

I want a Labor Government, so that the life of the nation may be carried on. Nineteen twenty-four is not the last in God's program of creation. My friends, we will be dead and gone and forgotten and generation after generation will come, and there will still be the search for the Holy Grail by knights like Keir Hardie. The shield of love and the spear of justice will still be in the hands of good and upright men and women, and the ideal of a great future will still be in front of our people. I see no end, thank God, to those things. I see my horizon, I see my own skyline, but I am convinced that when my children or children's children get there there will be another skyline, another horizon, another dawning, another glorious beckoning from heaven itself. That is my faith, and in that faith I go on and my colleagues go on, doing in their own lives what they can to make their addition, to contribute something substantial to the well-being, the happiness and the holiness of human life.



## APPENDIX H

### THE WAY TO PEACE

*Speech delivered by Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., Prime Minister of Great Britain and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the League of Nations Assembly at Geneva, September 4th, 1924.*

I AM very glad that it has been my good fortune to have an opportunity of taking part in the work of the League of Nations. The League of Nations, both as an organization and as a spirit, is struggling under somewhat adverse circumstances, and I am here to-day as a pledge that the country I represent—Great Britain—will use every means in its power to widen the influence and increase the authority of the League of Nations.

Ah! my friends, the emotions that come as one stands here facing delegates from over half a hundred nations, many of them devastated, all of them impoverished owing to the war; facing delegates battling against those adverse circumstances and yet hoping against hope very often, determined sometimes when determination appears to be little better than folly, that by our intelligence and goodwill we shall through the League of Nations lay securely and finally the foundations of peace upon earth!

The late war was commended in my country as being a war to end all wars. Alas! the human eye sees but few prospects that that hope and that pledge are to be fulfilled. I do not know what the Divine Mind sees, the Divine Mind that sees the future as clearly as you and I can see the present; but I hope it sees more calm confidence in the future and more happiness in it than the human mind, which has to nourish its faith upon appearances. If the future is to justify our confidence and happiness it will be owing solely to the deliberations, the negotiations, the work, and the agreement of the League of Nations.

The danger of supreme importance which is facing us now is that national security should be regarded merely as a military problem and based solely on the predominance of force. For a moment that may

do, for a moment that may lull to sleep, for a moment that may enable large nations and small to believe that their existence will be no longer challenged.

But, my friends, there is evolution in every plan and a consequence of every idea, and if, after all the appalling evidence in history that military force cannot secure, we to-day go back and repeat the follies of our ancestors, then the security we give of the day is only a betrayal of the nation that we lull to sleep under it.

In offering some observations upon that theme, and in making some comments on various proposals which have been made in connection with it, I wish to assure the Assembly that speaking first does not mean that what I am going to say is something that I throw to your heads and then allow you to say what you like. No, my friends, we are here for cooperative discussion. We are here to listen to each other. We are here to put our ideas into a common pool, and there is no delegation more determined to pursue that policy than the British Delegation, of which I happen to have the honor to be at the head at the present moment.

Now let us be quite clear upon one thing. The British Government has not given an adverse report upon the proposed Treaty of Mutual Assistance because it is indifferent to the problem of national security. That is not true. The British Government feels, as I am sure the whole of the Assembly feels, under the greatest obligation to the men who sat on that Commission that produced the draft treaty. These things have to be done. My friends, none of us has inherited a tilled soil prepared for peace. I wish we had.

Our position rather is the position of the early pioneers who went away out to Australia, to Africa, and to the very remote parts of the world, and found that within an inch of the landing-place where they set foot they had to blaze a trail, they had to fell the forest, they had to dig the ground, and they had to uproot the evil roots that were in possession before them.

They toiled and toiled and toiled, not for immediate harvest, but they toiled to make their great preparations, and, as the result of that preparatory toil, when you go there now they show you their smiling and peaceful fields. That is our work. That is the work of the League.

It is a contribution to that work that has been made by the Commission that produced this draft Report, which the British Government,

for various reasons stated, cannot regard as the final word upon this important subject.

Our position, briefly, is this: We do not believe that military alliances are going to bring security. We believe that a military alliance in an agreement for security is like a grain of mustard seed, small to begin with; that is the essential seed of the agreement, and that seed with the years will grow and grow and grow until at last the tree that has been produced from it will overshadow the heavens, and we shall be back in exactly the military position in which we found ourselves in 1914.

Moreover, the British Government, wishing to carry out to the very letter every comma and every sentence of any obligation to which it puts its signature, cannot and will not put its signature to an indefinite document.

If we are going to have obligations, if we say we are going to carry them out, we want to know exactly what they are. An obligation that is based on psychology, an obligation that is based upon fear of other people, an obligation that we may have to meet not because a nation has been faced by enemies sent to beset it by the devil, but because a nation may be beset by enemies on account of its own policy—that sort of obligation we cannot undertake, because if we did undertake it I want to tell you perfectly honestly that we should find when we tried to carry it out that public opinion would make it impossible for us to do so.

Moreover, if the Assembly will look at the amendments which have been proposed to the draft treaty and put them all in, put them all together, the Assembly will see that the amendments destroy the draft treaty even when they are offered in support of it. There are certain amendments that were brought in by certain Governments and described as essential that were considered by the Commission, were rejected by the Commission, and if they had not been rejected by the Commission, the Commission would never have found unanimity to produce the draft treaty.

Therefore, if this kind of obligation were to be imposed upon the nations affiliated to the League—I may be wrong, but I am profoundly of this opinion that that would break the League, that great secessions would take place, and that a large number of nations that would remain in affiliation to the League would do it with such reserve that the obligation taken by them would be of no value whatever. That is why the

British Government has felt that the last word has not been said of this draft treaty, and wishes that the matter shall be further considered.

Now, what contribution can we make now to those preparing the way? Where does the League stand in its pursuit of peace and of the essential conditions under which arms can be reduced?

I think the first problem is the League itself and its composition. This League, if it has the authority to give security, must be a comprehensive League. This League will remain inefficient unless it has not only got the threatened nations in but the threatening, or so-called threatening, nations in. Both sides must be there.

There are our American friends, remote geographically, blissfully and enviably separated from the troubles that lie at our doors. Europe for the last few years has not offered America a very attractive companionship. If, like a beloved partner, America had found us sitting at its fireside, I am not quite sure that its domestic felicities would have been of the very best kind.

I therefore never believed that America would do anything else except leave us alone. But America has rendered us very valuable help. We have never, so far as I know, asked the assistance of America to do *ad hoc* work. But America has come in and loyally given us all the support that she possibly can.

In the recent London Conference, which has so splendidly, I think, changed the European outlook, America bore a most helpful part. One day, not because you are going to appeal to her, not because you are going to bring pressure to bear upon her, but one day because we ourselves have been wise enough to make our own efforts for peace successful, America's own heart will incline her to come in, and then she will find that an honored and welcome place is waiting for her in our councils.

But there is Germany and there is Russia. Now, Germany cannot remain outside the League of Nations. If I may use a formula that may be misunderstood—I hope it will not be—we cannot afford to allow her to remain out. There is not a single discussion upon armaments, upon the conditions of peace, upon security, upon the safety and the guarantee of the existence of small nationalities—not a single one that we can sit together and discuss amongst ourselves and have a menacing vacant chair in our midst.

Nor can Germany remain out in her own interest. Negotiations with Berlin isolated can never be effective. The London Conference created



a new relationship between Germany and the other European States, and that relationship should now be sealed and sanctified by Germany's appearance on the floor of this Assembly. The League takes upon itself as its first task the creating once again of the European system, and that European system never will exist until our late enemies have ceased to be our enemies and have come in to take their cooperative part in that system.

I hope, in spite of the difficulties, and in spite of the technicalities that still apparently remain in the way, that this will be done at once. Let us begin a new era of the League, as I hope we are beginning a new era of Europe. I should like very much, if it were possible during the three or four weeks that the Assembly will continue its session, that this matter should be taken up, not with the idea of postponing it, but with the idea of settling it now, once and for all.

With reference to Russia, the situation is somewhat different. The Russian Soviet Government believes in revolutions. It believes in the dissolution of the old as an essential preliminary to the creation of the new. That being so, I can understand that there is little attraction in the League of Nations for them. We are evolutionists. The revolutions we believe in are the organic revolutions which life has always to respond to if it is to keep adjusted to its new circumstances. This is our view.

But even Russia has changed. It is now making treaties. It is now pursuing diplomatic methods. I hope that the agreement which the British Government has come to with the Soviet Government of Russia is not only the first of a series of agreements, but is the first indication that the Russian Government is itself prepared to come in and be a part of the cooperating European system, and so, being here, to complete the authority and influence of the League of Nations.

That is what the League itself wants. Now what about its work? How are we going to approach this problem of peace and security?

In talking to friends I am sometimes appalled to find how little the outsider knows about the practical work of the League. If the League makes a mistake, that is blazed abroad in every newspaper throughout the world. If the League gets a rebuff, say in—well, perhaps I'd better not say—you can fill in the blanks according to your tastes and your knowledge—that is blazed abroad too. The quiet work done by the Commissions is realized by very few. I hope before the month is over

that the world will be better acquainted with this magnificent practical work than it is at the present time.

In connection with peace and security, I want to mention one matter which gives me much concern. Apart from the great national organization of arms, there is a very active and growing illegal and illicit private transaction and export in arms. This is not satisfactory. The understanding is that it shall not exist; in certain treaties it is absolutely prohibited, and, if I might say it, for any of the Allies to wink at it and not put their feet hard down upon it is not playing the game.

I hope that all the Powers directly or indirectly concerned in this manufacture and traffic will be frowned upon without the least hesitation by all the authorities of the League. The British Government takes a very firm stand in the matter, and I appeal to you for your support.

That is a side issue, however important it may be. The main problem is the problem of national security in relation to national armaments. Let us face that as realists, not as sentimentalists or as mere idealists, but as scientific realists who go right to the root of the whole thing. The superficial school who imagine that by putting certain phrases upon paper they secure an enforceable obligation are met straightway with the possibility of giving definitions to two simple words.

First of all, there is security. What is security?

Secondly, there is aggression. What is aggression?

Take the latter, What is aggression? Has any wit yet devised an act which of itself makes the first aggression absolutely clear?

As a matter of fact, everybody who knows their history knows this, that the ability to assign responsibility for aggression is always about the last thing done, and it belongs to the historian who studies and writes fifty years after a war, and never to the politician who lives through the beginnings of the war.

But we can approach it very closely. The only way we can secure, the only way we can approximate to an accurate attribution of responsibility for aggression is arbitration, the setting up of a court or courts, because you cannot have one court for the purpose.

There are judicial questions. There are political questions. There are questions that can only be settled by the wise and enlightened citizens. There are questions that can only be settled by the trained and expert lawyer. But the system of arbitration is a system of watching the clouds, a system of warning when a cloud just the size of a man's

hand appears above the horizon, and the taking of steps at once not of a military kind but of a rational and judicial kind, to charm it out of existence.

The test is, are you willing to arbitrate? The test is, are you willing to explain? The test is, will you come before us and tell us what you propose to do? The test is, will you expose your weakness? Are you afraid of the world? Are you afraid of daylight, or are you a lover of darkness and timorous lest the world should know what is in your mind? That is the test, and the only test.

Now, we are going through a transition period. I do not believe there is any man in this Assembly, not even my dear good friend M. Herriot, who feels the burden of that transition period more than I. We have inherited tremendous responsibilities. God knows that sometimes we feel they are too heavy for us. We have inherited the working of an old system. If we were to issue an instruction that a button should be removed from the vest of some official, we should be almost afraid of the result and the repercussion of the change that took place.

The world seems a weary place to those of us who have not the luxury—I hope I shall not be misunderstood—of being Prime Ministers of unit States, but who have the awful burdens of dealing with our own country one day, with a Dominion the next day, with a foreign country the day after, and with a mandated State the day after that—with all the complexities of race, with all the complexities of creed, with all the complexities of historical traditions.

There we sit at the same desk, day after day, turning one hour to one and the next hour to the other—I say God knows that the burdens of such an office are very often too heavy for a pair of human shoulders to carry.

All the more anxious are we at this transition period to hold out our hands to changes. What we have to do is to hold out one hand to the past, and to hold out the other hand to the future, and to move steadily on, taking the past with us, and embracing the prospects of the hopes and the comforts which the future gives us.

I must therefore go very carefully. I am in favor of arbitration; I see nothing else for the world. If we cannot devise a proper system of arbitration, then do not let us fool ourselves that we are going to have peace. Let us go back to the past; let us go back to competitive armaments; let us go back to that false, whited sepulcher of security of

military pacts—there is nothing else for us—and let us prepare for the next war, because that is inevitable.

What is the problem? We must devise more successfully than we have done hitherto the courts that are to operate under the system of arbitration. We must explore more fully than we have done hitherto the matters that ought to be referred and can be referred to them, at any rate to begin with. We must visualize with more accuracy than we have done hitherto the nature of the obligations upon States that arbitrate.

For instance, the question has arisen as to whether the optional clause in the International Court's Statute is one that would operate in war or in peace. Some of my friends say that it is universal; others say, "No, it only operates in peace." That must be settled and must be laid down clearly.

Further, I want to know how far my Government—for my colleagues are with me in this—can go, even if some of you do not go as far as that. It is that terrible problem of the practical blending of the ideal with the real which presses upon all of us who want to change the mind and the system of Europe.

I should propose that the article in the International Court's Statute dealing with arbitration—that is, the optional clause—should become the subject of a very careful examination by a Commission appointed by us for the purpose of being brought up before the end of the Assembly in a somewhat more accurate, expanded, and definite form than it now has.

It is the desire of the British Government to sign undertakings like the optional clause of the statute of the International Court. But before taking so great a step it is proper that the clause should be put in the most specific form possible. I have consulted my colleagues and also the Governments of the Dominions with a view to considering the points to which I have referred.

An essential condition of security and peace is justice. Justice must be allowed to speak before passion. That is arbitration. Parallel with this problem of arbitration is the direct problem of armaments themselves. I am very glad—and I think the Assembly will thank me for taking note of this—to see my old friend the Prime Minister of Denmark here, whose declaration regarding the army and navy of Denmark has really led the way for sane countries all the world over.

Now as regards naval Armaments, America has taken the first step.



We came to an agreement there. Sometimes I hear things about a certain review at Spithead about a week or two ago. I wonder what the gentlemen who object to the review would have said if I had kept all those ships in my pocket and assured the world that I had none at all.

This I challenge this Assembly upon: we came to an agreement at Washington. We signed that agreement. There is no country that signed that agreement that with more accuracy and more determination is fulfilling it in the letter and spirit than Great Britain herself. We have fulfilled that agreement as we fulfil all agreements of that character. I think that we might now go further. I hope that Washington is not "weary in its well-doing." I should be very glad to have further communications so that more exploration can be undertaken of the great problem of naval armaments.

But land armaments are far more difficult to deal with, and they touch us here far more intimately. Let us be realists here again. Supposing that this Assembly was here and now to call an International Conference for the reduction of armaments, what would happen? Absolute failure. Why? Because preparations for it have not been adequately made. We must prepare the way. We must have an atmosphere. We must have confidence. We must have machinery.

There is the opportunity of the League from this very moment onward. The London Conference, by bringing back a reasonable national policy in Europe, helped. If we had Germany in the League, what tremendous help that would be for this! If we had the beginnings of arbitration, well-devised terms of reference, Courts well considered and the larger Powers subscribing to the declaration, what a substantial step forward that would be! All that can be done within this year. Why not? What is in the way? Our own fears and our own suspicions.

If we would only take our courage in our hands, if the large nations and the small nations represented here to-day would only meet, would only create the right Commission, and give it the determination that we had in London that no obstacles would baulk us, the success of that Commission would be assured within a year, and the League of Nations would be able to summon the countries and then by careful handling, by patient work, and by reasonable consideration, would get a successful issue to the Conference.

One of the essentials is that all the nations must be in it. Another essential is that it must be held in Europe. It will be prolonged, and if

we are to have really the responsible men present they must be not very far from the cities of their own Governments and be able to keep their hands on their national affairs whilst they are representing the interests of their nations at the Disarmament Conference.

I have one final proposal—and I apologize for the length of time I am taking in addressing you this morning. My final point is this: the Covenant of the League of Nations has ample provisions for the starting of arbitration, for the sanctions that are necessary and for all other eventualities that may arise. Alas, the Covenant was drafted immediately after the war and before statesmen were able to see exactly of what the precise nature of the problems were to be that the nations would have to face a year or two after the Armistice.

What we require now is that the Covenant itself should be elaborated. We do not want a new foundation. Before it is elaborated it ought to be understood. I was very much surprised to find that some members of the League of Nations took the view they did in regard to a reference in the letter that the British Government addressed to the secretariat of the League regarding the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. It was a reference to the fact that the Council of the League in military matters could only recommend. I was surprised to find that some people imagine that by doing that the British Government was trying to take from the Council some power that it now has.

It is not true. There never was any such intention. What is wanted is accurate reading of the Covenant. Those who signed the Covenant—article 16, for instance—made it perfectly clear that on military matters the Council would only be an advisory body, but on economic matters and other matters the signatories of the Covenant did not even call in the Council at all, but there and then took upon themselves directly the obligation of acting in a hostile way to nations that broke the provisions of the Covenant.

The Covenant is very much stronger than some of our friends imagine. We think that what ought to be done now is to explore this matter, beginning with the Covenant, applying the Covenant to our present circumstances, and in the spirit of the League of Nations developing a policy that will give security and reduce armaments.

The British Government stands by the Covenant. The British Government has no wish to reduce the authority of the Council. The British Government wishes to extend the authority of the Council consistently

with the continued existence and the prosperity of the League. Clauses 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16 of the Covenant may well form themselves into a charter of peace if we would only apply them and fill them out.

Now what is the position in which we find ourselves? We are here preparing, as I see it, for this International Armaments Conference. That ought to be the object. If we can remove the obstacles in the way of that we shall have done a tremendous amount of work that in its very nature, once it is done, is bound to be permanent, because the reason and morality of the world will stand by it so loyally.

Here we are going to make speeches. We are going to lay down our views. The people who will speak are responsible men and women. We have a draft treaty in front of us. We have the various Governments' criticisms upon that draft treaty. We have, in addition, a most interesting and profitable American plan.

Let us take those as our preparations to date. Let us hand them over to a Commission that will prepare for the armaments conference, and let us see to it that even before we rise, before the Assembly scatters, some substantial progress shall be made in coordinating those ideas and in producing from their apparent diversities some measure of agreement and consent. During the next few months let us work in our own countries hard and sleeplessly to remove all those obstacles, and if that is done I am sure that the League will never require to apologize for itself in the eyes of the world.

We here are practical men, responsible for Governments and responsible for the welfare of our nations, and there is not a single one of us who will sacrifice national welfare. Fortunately it is not necessary, because the more any nation enjoys of welfare the more valuable is it as a cooperator with other nations in the European system.

The world expects much of us. Fellow-delegates, can we not have the courage to give the world what it expects? History is full of invasions, full of wars, and full of aggressions, and there have always been pacts, always military guarantees, and always military security. The history of the world is a history which shows the nations always ready for war and always at war (and the one is absolutely essentially, and organically connected with the other)—history is full of the doom of nations that trusted the false security.

Above all, I appeal to the small nationalities, to the leaders of the small nationalities which maintain the frame of historical and personal individuality in a military world. Pacts or no pacts, you will be invaded.

Pacts or no pacts, you will be crushed. Pacts or no pacts, you will be devastated. The certain victim of a military age and the military organization of society is the small nationality that trusts upon its moral claims to live. Evil will be made upright and entirely free to do its work if you fling yourselves once more into that security which has never made you secure since the world started.

Our interests for peace are far greater than our interests in creating a machinery of defense. A machinery of defense is easy to create, but beware lest in creating it you destroy the chances of peace. What the League of Nations has to do is to advance the interests for peace.

The world has to be habituated to our existence, the world has to be habituated to our influence. We have to embody in the world confidence in the order and the rectitude of law, and then nations, with the League of Nations enjoying the authority, with the League of Nations looked up to not because its arm is great, but because its mind is calm and its nature is just, can pursue their destinies in the feeling of perfect security, none daring to make them afraid.

That is the outlook, and that is the policy that the British Government stand by, and to which it invites the League of Nations to adhere.



## APPENDIX I

### *Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's Election Address to the Electors of the Seaham Division of Durham, issued on May 10th, 1929.*

THE resignation of Mr. Sidney Webb, who, after a long life of disinterested and distinguished service to the Labor and Socialist Movement, finds that he must slacken his pace during his remaining years, has led to the Seaham Labor Party asking me to become the Labor candidate for the Division. My connections with Durham have been so long and so intimate that I should be proud to be one of its representatives.

Durham has had its share of the distress which has lain upon the coal-fields for years. The coal industry has been brought to the verge of ruin by the suicidal competition of an antiquated private enterprise, which could neither get coal economically nor sell it efficiently. Thus the coal-fields became not only the scene of terrible personal distress, the brunt of which had to be borne by women and children, but also the center of grave industrial unrest. The Government's display of class bias destroyed the confidence of the Trade Unionists of the whole country that from high places they would get fair play, and thus were created the conditions from which the industrial troubles of 1926 arose. In the end, the Government allied itself with the owners of the worst type and aided by influence and legislation those who believed that prosperity could be restored by low wages and long hours. The General Strike of 1926 was the price which the country had to pay for the Tory majority of 1924. History repeated itself. Reaction bred unrest.

In face of the terrible suffering of far over 1,000,000 unemployed and their dependents, the Government could devise nothing until this election began to wake them up. If a man put as little energy into his business as the Government put into meeting the gravity of unemployment, he would be bankrupt in a very short time. They have systematically taxed the necessities of life of the wage-earners, they have raided the reserves in the thrift societies of the masses, they have lowered national credit both financially and politically. In the national interests they must go.

As to immediate and ultimate steps for the handling of your distress, I accept the proposals jointly made by the Labor Party and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

The industry requires to be organized on a national basis, and therefore to be nationalized, but in the meantime the distress in the mining areas must be dealt with, hours shortened and pension schemes extended, coal better used, and immediate steps taken to remove present hardships from miners' homes.

Trade prosperity is the special concern of Labor. We, unlike the Tories, are not a class party. To us, national prosperity is not the opportunity for profiteering, but the only prospect for an ample life. The worker, his wife, and family now make claim for a nook in their own country where they can have a chance to give service to others and enjoy the results of their work. In a sentence, that is the purpose inspiring the Labor Party.

Labor was, therefore, the first to make unemployment a political issue. That issue remains in the forefront of its program. Both the other parties have pledged themselves to deal with it, and have enjoyed both the time and the majorities necessary to fulfil those pledges. They have failed, and failed lamentably. They have come to an end of their own ideas and they have had to borrow ours. They will still fail. Our published program of national work which will help to absorb the unemployed is, therefore, a program of national development and of stimulation to trade—both home and export trade. While the unemployed are being absorbed in industry, Labor will see to it that they are not thrown upon the Guardians, but that adequate insurance allowances will be paid. The figures of unemployment are the measure of the failure of the organization of our economic life, and they can be reduced permanently only by restoring the nation to health.

The following leading points will put you in possession of what immediate aims a Labor Government would put before it:—

The 1924 program of house-building will be continued until 1,000,000 houses to be let at working-class rents have been built. Slum clearance will be pushed ahead at once with the necessary Treasury grants to local authorities.

The figures of maternal mortality must be reduced and public health services extended in the direction of the protection of motherhood. This will include an ampler program of benefits from the National

Health Insurance funds. The health of children must be cared for by pre-natal and baby clinics.

The children must be prepared for life by a great development of nursery schools, a reduction in the size of classes of elementary schools, an opening of the way to universities through secondary schools, with the necessary maintenance grants.

The adult in mine and factory requires protection. A Labor Government would pass the Factories Bill which has been the subject of several pledges which this Government has broken. It would ratify the Washington Eight Hours Convention, amend the Workmen's Compensation Acts and the Trade Union law so that the grave and insulting injustice done to industrial combinations of workmen by this Government shall not continue. It will grant the requests of the cotton, iron, and steel industries for an inquiry into their conditions with a view to dealing with them. It will shorten the hours of miners so that the benefits of improved production may fructify in their homes and not merely in the bank balances of the coalowners. It will appoint a commission to consider licensing laws and the control of the liquor traffic in relation to the sobriety of our people.

The weak and aged must be properly cared for. The pensions system has grown up in bits. It ought to be unified, gaps filled up, economies effected, and full benefits given to the insured. In particular, a complete scheme of widows' pensions should be established and the aged worker who has passed his vigorous days in industry should be pensioned off.

Much of this expenditure will save a great deal now spent badly through pauperizing agencies, and therefore will not be a net cost to the country. The fundamental principle in Labor taxation is that the cost of Government and of the social services should be levied so that the standards of life of the masses of the people are not lowered in consequence, as has happened under this Government. Land values should be taxed, and other huge unearned incomes largely squandered in extravagances should bear more taxation, and the country, so far from being impoverished, would really be enriched.

The Labor Party has not forgotten that agriculture is an essential industry, and the party has produced a program relating to the countryside which, for the first time, joins industrial experience with rural needs. That is being expounded by our agricultural candidates.

You know how dear to me is the cause of peace, and I am sure that

I need say nothing about it to you, beyond giving you an assurance that the pacifying work that I was able to do at the Foreign Office in 1924 will be continued under any Labor Government. The position of this country as a pioneer of Peace has not improved during the reign of the present Government.

You have to elect a new Government. Is it to be reactionary, or is it to be Labor? None else is possible. They try to disturb your nerves and your judgment about Labor and Socialism, but by so doing they only insult your intelligence. The stability of this nation is not so ramshackle, nor is its democratic machinery so useless, as those upset by the folly of their own nightmares, imagine. The voice of the scaremonger is indeed the voice of the complacent person interested in the continuance of all our wrongs. Progress is the condition of the continued existence of Society. Each generation hands over problems to the next to solve, and that next wins the gratitude of humanity only in so far as it applies wider, higher, and deeper ideas of social unity in the solution of these problems. The paralyzed mind which, in face of all our distress and the urgency of our vital unsolved problems, can only gasp in terror. "Safety First" is the apostle of stagnation and the creator of revolution. The nation needs a more faithful and stimulating lead than that, and the Labor Party gives it.

I feel confident that Seaham will renew its allegiance and that it will choose as its representative one who believes in Labor and Socialist ideas and will do his best to apply them in a businesslike way as a solution of our industrial difficulties and an augmentation of our national prosperity.



## APPENDIX J

### LABOR'S APPEAL TO THE NATION

*The Official Program of the Labor Party at the General Election, 1929.*

THE long-awaited opportunity has now come for the Nation to give its verdict on the present Government.

By its inaction during four critical years it has multiplied our difficulties and increased our dangers. Unemployment is more acute than when Labor left office. International relations are worse. Vast areas of the country are derelict. The posters on our hoardings announcing the grim truth that "a million of our fellow-countrymen are needing food and clothing" tell how the Government has failed.

In the face of such a state of things this Tory Government has sat supinely with folded arms without a policy, without a vision, waiting for Providence or charity to do its work.

For nine months the Government watched the paralyzing struggle in the Coal Industry. It aided and abetted the mine-owners when they locked out the men, and provoked the industrial unrest that led to the General Strike, for which the Government was mainly responsible.

The Government's further record is that it has helped its friends by remissions of taxation, whilst it has robbed the funds of the workers' National Health Insurance Societies, reduced Unemployment Benefits, and thrown thousands of workless men and women on to the Poor Law.

The Tory Government has added £38,000,000 to indirect taxation which is an increased burden on the wage-earners, shop-keepers and lower middle classes. In its only Budget the Labor Government reduced the Food Taxes by £25,000,000. Now that the Election is in sight the Tory Chancellor has repealed what was left of the Tea Duty, but has retained the duties on sugar, coffee and cocoa and other foods. This remission only amounts to one-sixth of the additional indirect taxation he has added in the last four years.

Whilst every economic influence has been tending to reduce the cost

of living the Government's policy has been to put obstacles in the way. It means to continue this policy. The Tory plan for solving Unemployment and improving trade—called "Safeguarding"—was denounced by the Prime Minister in 1923 as "pottering along." He was right, as experience shows. "Safeguarded" countries have Unemployment, low wages and sweating, poverty, generally corrupt politics and high costs of living.

In order to hide their record of incompetence and reaction, Tory leaders are trying to frighten the electors with horrifying pictures of the disasters which would come upon the country if a Labor Government were returned.

It was such scaremongering tactics as this which gave the Tories a majority at the last Election. We do not believe that the voters will be misled a second time by such discreditable deception.

We warn the electors against the misrepresentations of Socialism and the aims and policy of the Labor Party, which are already pouring from our opponents.

The Labor Party is neither Bolshevik nor Communist. It is opposed to force, revolution and confiscation as means of establishing the New Social Order. It believes in ordered progress and in democratic methods.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

The Labor Party gives an unqualified pledge to deal immediately and practically with this question. Its record on Unemployment is a guarantee that this pledge will be kept. Only by the unceasing advocacy of Labor have the claims of the Unemployed been forced to the forefront of political issues in the teeth of the opposition and neglect of the Liberal and Tory Parties.

When the Labor Government was in office it announced to Parliament schemes of a comprehensive and far-reaching character which it had already begun to put into effect. Immediately afterwards both Parties united and defeated the Government! They could not tolerate its continued success.

Our schemes for dealing with Unemployment have been before the country for years before the Liberal Party—in the hope of reviving its declining fortunes—appropriated some of them and proclaimed them as original.

They are threefold in character.

*I. National Development and Trade Prosperity.*

Labor will undertake—

Housing and Slum Clearance.

Land Drainage and Reclamation.

Electrification.

The Reorganization of Railways and Transport.

New Roads and Road and Bridge Improvements.

Afforestation associated with Small Holdings.

Training and assistance by agreements with the Dominions for those who wish to try their fortunes in new lands.

The most important attack upon Unemployment is to restore prosperity to the depressed industries, and develop our country. This program will not only provide employment for large numbers of those who are now out of work, but its reaction on other industries will be immediate and beneficial.

There is a great market at home which can be developed by increasing the purchasing power of the working classes. There is a greater market overseas, especially in India and the Crown Colonies, where there are enormous populations with a very low standard of living and vast undeveloped resources.

A Labor Government will set to work at once by using Export Credits and Trade Facilities Guarantees, to stimulate the depressed export trades of Iron and Steel, Engineering, and Textile Manufactures. Shipbuilding and Shipping will immediately be benefited by an increase of foreign trade, and the improved employment in these industries will be a great addition to the purchasing power in the home market.

*II. Maintenance.*

The Labor Party's plan for dealing with Unemployment is to provide work; but pending the absorption of the unemployed in regular occupations it will take steps to relieve the present distress. It will also amend the Unemployment Insurance Act so as to afford more generous maintenance for the unemployed, and will remove those qualifications which deprive them of payments to which they are entitled.

*III. The Young and the Old.*

A Labor Government would also relieve the congestion in the labor market. Every year about 400,000 young persons, inadequately edu-

cated and inadequately trained, are brought into the labor market; while at the other end there are thousands of aged persons now compelled by poverty to struggle for employment who would be willing to retire if proper provision were made for them.

The Party would extend the school age to fifteen with the necessary Maintenance Grants and provide Adequate Pensions for Aged Workers.

The state of the Coal Mining Industry is so tragic that measures would be immediately undertaken to alleviate the distress in the coal fields, reorganize the industry from top to bottom both on its productive and marketing sides, and shorten the hours of labor. A Labor majority would Nationalize the Mines and Minerals as the only condition for satisfactory working. It would develop the scientific utilization of coal and its valuable by-products, now largely wasted.

The Labor Party is the Party of the Workers' Home. In 1924 it revived the policy of building Houses to be let and not sold.

It will return to that policy until there are enough Houses let at Working-class Rents.

It will deal drastically with the Slum disgrace and will provide the necessary money grants for both purposes.

In the meantime it will protect tenants by continuing the Rent Restriction Acts.

Peace is one of the greatest issues of the Election. The Labor Government found Europe distracted by hostility and left it in a peaceful frame of mind. The Party's record when in office entitles it to the confidence of all lovers of peace. It desires to resume its work and to regain for this country the proud position it held in 1924.

The Tory Government has hampered Disarmament, and systematically obstructed the work of the League of Nations and of the International Labor Office. Labor's policy is precisely the opposite. It will establish the largest possible measure of political and economic cooperation amongst the nations, and give the fullest and most cordial support to the League and the International Labor Office.

Labor stands for Arbitration and Disarmament. It will accept the general Act of Arbitration, Conciliation and Judicial Settlement approved by the League. A drastic reduction of armaments is long overdue. Labor welcomes the initiative of the United States. It will press for the speedy completion of the Disarmament Treaty and the convocation of a General Disarmament Conference.



Labor will reestablish diplomatic and commercial relations with Russia.

Labor is deeply concerned about Agriculture which, having been a plaything of both the older Parties, is now facing very critical times both for farmers and workers. An Agricultural Policy must be co-ordinated with a Town Policy. Farming must be made to pay.

Landlordism has ceased to be able to perform its functions and it cannot be allowed to go on starving the Land of capital and the countryside of cultivation and people, and generally obstructing national need and development. The Land must therefore pass under Public Control.

Meanwhile, Farmers should have Security of Tenure; Fair Rents; Capital and Credit Assistance; A system of Organized Marketing; and Stability in the Prices of main crops and products.

Workers should have a Minimum Wage; Unemployment Insurance; Easier Access to Holdings; and Better and Untied Cottages.

A Labor Government would work with representatives of all the interests concerned to gain these objects.

The Labor Party has always been committed to securing Equal Educational Opportunities for every child. It will raise the school-leaving age to fifteen with the requisite Maintenance Grants and at once develop facilities for Free Secondary Education. Labor will open the road, to whoever is able to take it, from the Nursery School to the University.

The Party stands for a system of Taxation which will distribute the burden fairly according to "ability to pay."

It will abolish Taxes on Food and other necessities, and provide what revenue is needed by Death Duties on large estates and by graduating the Income Tax and Sur-Tax with a view to relieving the smaller, while increasing the contribution from the larger, incomes. The Labor Party will carry still further the differentiation between "earned" and "unearned" incomes.

The Party will deal drastically with the scandal of the appropriation of Land Values by private landowners. It will take steps to secure for the community the increased value of land which is created by industry and the expenditure of public money.

The grave injustices of the existing Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Pensions Acts would be immediately remedied, and as soon as the

urgent legislation to deal with Unemployment had been carried through, a comprehensive coordination and extension of all the Pensions Schemes would be undertaken so as to give the opportunity to many classes of persons now excluded to come in.

The limit of seven years which has meant so much injustice to ex-Service Men will be removed, so that cases may still be considered.

Among the other measures which a Labor Government would enact are its Factories Bill, the Ratification of the Washington Eight Hours Convention, and the amendment of the Workmen's Compensation Acts and the Trade Union Law. It will also, as promised, appoint Committees of Inquiry into the causes of depression in the Cotton and Iron and Steel Industries with a view to their reorganization.

It would take steps to prevent the Profiteering in Food, and in Building Materials, and would watch the operations of Trusts and Combines, so that combinations, which enhance prices unreasonably or refuse to supply or to sell to persons who will not deal exclusively with them, may be made subject to law.

It would support the creation of separate legislative assemblies in Scotland, Wales and England, with autonomous powers in matters of local concern.

In order to prepare the way for the Reform of the Licensing Laws, the first necessary step is a full and impartial inquiry, which a Labor Government would institute at once by Royal Commission.

The Labor Party makes its appeal to the Women Voters with the fullest confidence. It was advocating the cause of Equal Citizenship when the Tory and Liberal Parties were either utterly hostile or hopelessly divided on the question. Although Equal Franchise has been secured after a protracted struggle, the fight for women's emancipation is not yet finished. There are other anomalies and injustices—legal, social and economic—especially affecting women and children which must be dealt with.

The Labor Party recognizes that the burden of social injustice and economic exploitation falls with special severity on women, and that women are very seriously affected by Unemployment, Low Wages, Bad Housing and by any restriction of the necessary public expenditure on Education and on the Health and Welfare of Mothers and Children. The prevention of Maternal Mortality will be an immediate concern of a Labor Government.

The Labor Party in its legislative and administrative policy would seek to pursue and apply the principle of equal treatment for men and women.

Moreover, there is the important question of universal peace, vital to all, which requires to be organized on a permanent basis so as to terminate for ever the futility of a civilized country squandering human life and wasting its national resources in war.

We shall not deceive the people by saying that the task of National and Social Reconstruction is easy, or that it can be accomplished in a day or a year. But the Labor Party does pledge itself to undertake this great work with energy and enthusiasm, and it confidently believes that, if it has a majority, in the full lifetime of a Parliament great advance in industrial prosperity, in social well-being, and in a more just distribution of the fruits of labor, can be made.

At this election, voters have to choose not only the representatives of constituencies, but a Government. A Labor Government is the only alternative to the present Tory Government.

The Liberal Party, as its leaders admit, can be no more than a small minority in the new Parliament.

The electors who desire to save the country from the disaster of continued Tory Rule must therefore vote for Labor Candidates.

Along this path Labor will advance.

The Labor Program of peaceful but determined National Development and Reconstruction leading towards the Socialist and Cooperative Commonwealth is the only alternative to Reaction and Revolution.

On this Program Labor asks for the support of men and women of goodwill of all classes. Labor wants to make its contribution to the removal of poverty and the injustices which to-day are diseases in society. Both the other Parties have been tried and have failed. The state of the country is the monument of their failure.

We pledge ourselves to give unsparingly the best we can of our energy, experience, and knowledge, to the great task of making Britain a happier and more contented land, and establishing peace in the world.

Signed on behalf of	}	J. RAMSAY MACDONALD ( <i>Chairman</i> ).
the Parliamentary		J. R. CLYNES ( <i>Vice-Chairman</i> ).
Labor Party.		

The Labor Party	}	HERBERT MORRISON ( <i>Chairman</i> ).
National Executive		ARTHUR HENDERSON ( <i>Secretary</i> ).

## APPENDIX K

*Final Election Address on behalf of the Labor Party broadcast by Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald from the Newcastle Station of the British Broadcasting Corporation on May 28th, 1929.*

THE electoral contest is drawing to a close, and I should be much indebted to you if you would give me your mind for half an hour so that I may place before you finally the issues as Labor sees them. You are going to take a decision which is to be one of the most important ever recorded at an election. For the first time the whole of our adult population may vote. Whoever has been through this campaign and has faced the thousands of young women at meetings from one end of the country to the other, as I have done, must agree that those of us who have for years contended that young women would be efficient citizens were perfectly right. She has brought a serious mind to her responsibilities, which has the promise that on Thursday she will deliver a sane judgment. The nation has lost confidence in the present Government, and without doubt is to leave it in a minority. The electors know that its administration, both at home and abroad, has been without vision and without grip. It has dawdled along trusting to time and to Providence rather than to its own guiding power. Such acts as the Widows' Pensions, for which it asks you to thank it, have been the result of other people's efforts. Others have made Acts for which the Government claims credit. The gaps and other serious flaws in these Acts show that they have been passed by a Party not keenly interested in them. Many subjects have been discussed during the election—international peace and the handling of the problem of grave unemployment have stood out as important issues.

When the Government came into office at the end of 1924, the way was already paved for the Locarno Agreement and the entry of Germany into the League of Nations. At the beginning of 1924 Europe was full of fear, suspicion and friction. France was in the Ruhr. The disagreements between Germany and the War Allies were still dangerous. France and Germany through their representatives had not yet



shaken hands. By the end of that year, owing to the services of the Labor Government, all that had changed. I myself made the first declaration at the Assembly of the League at Geneva that the time had come to admit Germany to League membership. What has happened since then? Failure to come to an understanding with America; failure to be of assistance to the Committee of the League of Nations preparing for a disarmament conference; a military agreement with France which would have been a serious set-back to disarmament hopes and which would in reality have weakened the defenses of our own country without giving us any compensating advantage. Then there is dilatoriness in supporting the Kellogg Pact; mistakes in the handling of Russian affairs which have seriously damaged our trade, which have contributed greatly to our unemployment, and been an impetus to the mischievous work of the Third International in China and India, and an unsettling influence in Europe.

We have not been swift to embrace opportunities and take a lead in the cause of peace. In the march forward we have been nearer to the rear than clearly in the front rank. I care greatly for what the next generation has to say about the part played by my country in these days, and that is why I am jealous lest at this moment of supreme importance in the history of the world Great Britain will be feeble when it should be strong—in leading-strings when it should be free to pioneer. But one thing I must emphasize is that if we lose our chance now, which really means if this Government is to be continued in power, that chance will not return either to us or to our children. The memories of the last war will grow dim. The world will get back into its old rut, familiar professions and piety about peace will again soothe us to sleep, and the various countries will once more base their security upon military preparation. So they will all, in the end, find themselves drifting hopelessly upon those currents that make for war—1914 will be repeated. This generation must not lose its chance. It has the war memories from which alone can come the energy to make peace secure. And remember what the next war is to be like. The old lines which divide combatants from non-combatants, the weak and the diseased from the strong and the robust, men from women and children, will all be obliterated and civilization itself assailed, and from sea and sky will be brought a heap of ruins. There can be no security until the Great Powers have agreed to settle their disputes, which have hitherto led to war, by conciliation and arbitration. This was the policy which the Labor Party was

working up to in 1924, and which it will pursue again when it is in office. This is the policy which the present Government has rejected with the stiffest of stiff necks, and that is why Lord Cecil resigned from it. No one who has been following the League of Nations' transactions can feel anything but regret when he remembers the part which has been played at Assembly after Assembly, and Council meeting after Council meeting, at Geneva. In matters of peace, our policy has not been safety first but safety last.

I have dealt with international affairs first of all to-night because in my view peace both at home and abroad is essential for progress and for the continual enjoyment by the mass of our people of a high standard of life, and because my own heart is in the cause. It is a great pleasure to me to find that at last both parties recognize the obligation of the community to the individuals and the families suffering from enforced unemployment. The day is not far behind when the Labor Party's argument that unemployment was uneconomic, politically and on human grounds, for the community concerned; the day is not far past when that was attacked by both the other Parties. The Mr. Baldwin of those days would have told you on the eve of a General Election that for Parliament to concern itself with unemployment was so subversive of the laws of nature that those of us who urged that were so extravagant that we were disturbing the tranquillity that business development required, and were altogether a Party whose candidates' names should be avoided by all who wished to see prosperity increased by the Government standing aside and doing nothing.

We have conquered both the other Parties while we were still in a minority, but it is one thing to get the cold acceptance of an unemployment program because events have compelled its opponents to yield, but a totally different thing to have that program as an essential part of the view of national unity and social obligation. On unemployment we have pledges in an unbroken series since Mr. Lloyd George gave his great promise during the election of 1918 that if returned to power he would produce plans for national development that would surprise us all. Within four years his failure to make his promise good caused most of his present associates to condemn him. Sir John Simon, who addressed you last night on his behalf, said he agreed that in his own experience his leader was so unreliable that what he did at one time was no sure indication of what he was to do at another. Those are the exact words used as recently as December 11th, 1926, and they

have a very direct and serious bearing on the value of a pledge when a pledge is being considered. Last night he said that when we examined the record of one who asked us to believe that he will fulfil his pledges we were only raising personal issues. The only remark I need make to that is that Sir John Simon is hardly likely to employ even a kitchen-maid without knowing how she behaved herself in her last situation.

Our position is perfectly clear. Unemployment cannot be cured by relief work nor by patchwork of any kind. We must develop national resources and improve trade so that there will be increased employment and a tremendous revolution in industry and in power by the use of electricity and petrol, which must be accompanied by reorganization of transport, including the making of roads, the reconditioning of railway plant and equipment, an extension of pensions which must enable the more aged workers to retire, the raising of the school age with necessary maintenance grants. We must dam the influx of premature people into industry. The coal industry is in a special position and will be dealt with specially in accordance with our election manifesto. Labor's program for dealing with unemployment is, therefore, not a program of relief works upon which the capital spent will be mainly lost to the country. It is a program designed to add to the wealth and efficiency of the nation, to give a spur to industry and to open the way to markets.

There are three classes of markets that we must stimulate and extend. The foreign market that depends on relative costs of production, and the dangers there are low wages and bad working conditions of some of our competitors. Our policy is to raise these through the International Labor Office at Geneva and by international agreements, like the Washington Convention which this Government has so blindly refused to ratify. Much of our plant also requires to be brought up-to-date, and the Labor Government will use trade credits to speed this up. Then there are our markets in the Dominions, which will depend upon our close cooperation and the advancing of mutual interests as a great world-wide family of nations. Our Crown Colonies are waiting like parched lands to be watered and made fruitful by introducing the steady guidance of Labor principles. The third is the home market, still so badly neglected. The social legislation, pensions and unemployment insurance, which Labor has done so much to advance, have meant that thousands of people have been able to buy what they otherwise could

not have done, and thousands of others have been kept at work who would have added to the regiment of the unemployed.

We do not believe that a nation can flourish on the poverty of its masses. Empty pockets are not only poverty, but breed poverty. Our own backs and stomachs still are the most neglected and yet the most profitable of our markets. Those who believe that Safeguarding or Protection is any aid to the development of that market had better study protected countries, where wages are low, unemployment is habitual, and poverty even worse than it is here. Unemployment insurance is not a dole, it is a benefit which has been paid for just like life insurance. These payments must be made adequate for the purpose in order to safeguard our people against the demoralization of charity. We have concentrated this policy into two points and they stand as representing our purpose. Work first of all, but if no work, maintenance. Unemployment and poverty in the cities is bound up with the decay of the countryside. Agriculture is not neglected by us.

The Labor Government during its brief run did much for the rural districts. It restored agricultural wages in the teeth of the enmity of both of the other Parties. It built rural houses. It has since worked hard on an agricultural policy, which is receiving wide support. It will at once, if returned to office, get into consultation with all the rural interests, including the representatives of the workers, and will apply its policy with the goodwill and cooperation of those concerned. Our candidates will have sent you their addresses, which will have given you the details of what we propose to do as regards, for instance, education in the highway through life, pensions, and the responsibility of the community for the weak, who cannot protect themselves, and the old, who have earned the right to lay down their tools in a corner and to walk in peace of mind through eventide.

I should like to refer to some things that may be troubling you and upon which you may like some information and assurance. We are charged with terrible sins, some of which, however, are really so silly that they need hardly be mentioned on the assumption that you take them seriously. One of these is that we are an unconstitutional Party. That from a Party which stirred up rebellion in Ireland and mutiny in the British Army, which challenged by armed forces a decision which they themselves accepted later on after conditions had become humiliating—that, my friends, to me seems to be rather barefaced.



Another charge is that we are a class Party because the Party was created for the purpose of bringing the life experience of the great mass of our people to guide political and economic policy. Against us our opponents say that they stand for national unity and suchlike. You cannot talk of national unity unless that unity embraces all classes and functions which give services to the whole varied life of the community. I cannot understand how it is that intelligent and honest people can continue to think that Labor is merely a class Party. If I had time to-night, and if it were profitable, I could prove to you not only the contrary, but I could turn the tables upon our Conservative antagonists and show that on their minds, on the composition of their Party, on their funds, on their appeals, and their achievements class and sectional interests are deeply stamped. One of the great reasons why I belong to the Labor Party and hold the Socialist views of what a wise and just social structure is, is because I detest class politics and want to end them in real national unity. In bringing that about we have to consider the claims of the great mass of our people, who, on account of their poverty, cannot adequately protect themselves. What has national unity meant to them? A change in a machine can make them outcasts; a change in fashion can make them paupers.

Consider the figures of your wealth distribution. Consider how little many who possess huge fortunes have done to deserve them. How often accumulation of superfluities has meant destruction to those who have them! Above all, consider how in all the benefits and enjoyments of real individuality, the great mass of our people begin life with nothing and end it with exactly the same amount. Man was never created for the purpose of becoming a mere economic plaything. He has rights which you can argue against, but which you will never dislodge from his heart. He will continue to claim them, in spite of all your academic reasoning. The Labor Party wants to bring within the bounds and the meaning of this national unity the bottom dog, as he is called. For this purpose we have organized our great public services. The Labor Party wishes to develop them. This Government has again and again hampered them. Mr. Churchill, for instance, raided the National Health Insurance income to the extent of £2,800,000 per annum. He overcame the difficulties of making a Budget balance at the expense of the health of the people—an exceedingly bad bargain for the nation. We should have spent that money so that maternal mortality, avoidable mortality, and health disasters might have been prevented. We have

pensioned widows not only because we feel responsibility for their condition, but because it was a way of enriching the life of the whole nation. The Labor Party will fill the gaps and remove some of the conditions attached to those pensions. We have shown our care for children by developing clinics for mothers and babies. The Labor Party will complete the work and establish nursery schools neglected by the present Government—until the election had drawn near.

Thus our family life will be made stable through a practical sense of national unity. We shall pursue immediately a housing policy which will provide a million working-class dwellings at reasonable rents, which are still required, and in the provision of these physical shelters we shall not forget that the house should be a home and should reflect something of the appreciation and the quiet and beauty which are essential. Thus will character and human qualities be enriched by a practical meaning being given to national unity. You see the consistent design running through our work giving the various items a place in the new social order. Progress and mutual helpfulness all along the line, devised in a practical kind of way. That is the plan of the Labor Government, and if it has the opportunity given to it it will realize that plan in the actual experience of life.

From this arise the nationalization proposals of the Party. In the process of time various industries have passed from monopolies to the public service of the State, and have been brought under public control. Municipal gas and water have ceased to disturb any of us, but they are Socialism, or it may be, as has happened with coal, that what is called private enterprise has broken down, and has to be buttressed up by huge State subsidies, and has become a costly, wasteful and ramshackle machine. Thus nationalization becomes the only effective remedy, however difficult it may be to carry it out. When this election campaign opened Mr. Baldwin's first shot was fired against nationalization. In every way it was unfortunate for him. His figures were wrong. His general statements were wrong. His descriptions were lamentably inadequate. The attack which was immediately opened upon him made him recast his statements, and he finally dropped the subject, whatever he may say or do to-morrow, when no further reply is possible. I make this statement, and challenge any one who has studied the facts to deny its truth, that one of the most characteristic features to-day about industrial development is the success of nationalization in one or other of its several forms. Public utility companies, the Ontario Hydro

Electricity Commission, the Canadian National Railway, our own Post Office, B.B.C., the Electricity Commission and so on. Nationalization can be used as a bogey by Conservatives only as long as the public are not familiar with its meaning and its work.

There is another class of misrepresentation which appears as a last-minute stunt at elections, and a good type has appeared this morning. Conservatives have issued a poster stating that the Labor Party voted against Bills like the Widows' Pensions Bill. That is plainly an attempt to deceive the electors. Those who drafted that poster know perfectly well our opposition to these Bills was because they were insufficient and unfair. That was stated in our speeches and amendments, and every Member of Parliament and the agents of political parties know it perfectly well. This same thing is always kept back till the last minute, so that there is no time to demolish the deception. The advent of wireless may rid the public life of that dishonesty. I must face finally the continued attempts made to frighten the electors, so that they will go to the ballot-boxes in a state of fear and trembling rather than firm conviction. Remember 1923, just before we went into office. Remember how every wild and ignorant person told you "the day the Labor Party enters Downing Street will be the beginning of the end." Remember what happened. I can claim surely without undue boastfulness that under the guardianship of Labor this country's honor abroad, its credit at home, its prospects of industrial revival, its experience of internal peace were better than they have been since. Had Labor remained in office, the industrial trouble of 1926 would not have arisen. Once again when the election of 1924 appeared over the horizon the same prophecies of destruction and chaos under Labor rule were made from the strident Liberals and Tories. An example of the partisan dishonesty, an attempt to deceive the public in a way unsurpassed by anything we are likely to experience again, is provided by two speeches delivered, one a few days before the election of 1924 when people had to be persuaded that we were dangerous rascals, and the other shortly after the great panic which yielded the fruit which the Conservatives had expected.

Before the election, when they had to scare the credulous, the words used were that the issue was between those who believed in keeping high "upon the mast of the Ship of State the Union Jack, and those who, like the Prime Minister, prefer to substitute the Red Flag of Revolution." Further accusations were piled up by that speaker. After the

election, when the truth could be told, these were the words used: "They acknowledged the debt of gratitude they owed to those who became the trustees of the majestic fabric of the British Empire. They were not unworthy trustees of the British Empire." Would you believe it that these contradictory words were spoken by the same person, Lord Birkenhead? They represent no change of opinion, but only a change of circumstances. Vote-catching determined the first pronouncement; conscience the second. But, as it used to be with soldiers, during an election, conscience is confined to barracks.

In deciding how you are to vote on Thursday I would beg you to remember that the result of all elections must be the formation of a Government. The electors can give one party or another a majority and thereby decide for themselves what the Government is to be, or they can vote so that when the House of Commons meets no party has a majority. Under such circumstances the Government which is formed depends upon Parliamentary bargains and compromise. This all means, as a matter of fact, that there is no democratically responsible Government, but only an Administration of convenience. This, again, means inefficiency in administration and uncertainty both as to the policy and the life of Parliament. The Liberal request, made in the full knowledge that it can be only a comparatively small group in the new Parliament, is that it shall be put in a position of determining who is to form the Government and what its policy is to be. That should be emphatically rejected by the electors. There are only two Parties from which a Government can be drawn—the Conservative Party of complacency and reaction, or the Labor Party, of progress, virility and courage. I place myself in your hands, and ask for your favorable verdict. Give Labor a fair chance. My colleagues wish to take up their work where they had to leave it off in 1924, to deal with unemployment, to develop the resources of the nation, to establish peace here and in the world outside. I have visited the country nearly from end to end, and I have seen and heard enough to bid me be of good cheer while Labor waits for Thursday's results.



## APPENDIX L

*An Article written while on a visit to Canada. Reprinted from "Forward," September 15th, 1928.*

WE find Canada a most homely place. In Quebec we feel strange. It is home and yet not home. A foreign tongue is heard in the streets and in conversation, a foreign architecture looks at us from the houses. In the public statuary there is an artistic touch which is Continental and not British. It has a flare of life and of gaiety that is not ours. And yet when we see a Union Jack floating from a pole it is not incongruous. Britain, especially Scotland, is "über alles."

One day, in Quebec, we found ourselves in a nunnery, where we had gone to see some pictures and Montcalm's tomb, and a building which in parts retained its seventeenth-century walls. We were told that the Mother Superior would like to speak with us. A door was opened and, upon entering, we were somewhat taken aback to see a great black iron grille in front of us, and beyond it, sitting in a crescent of chairs, a company of some thirty black-robed nuns. At their head, next to the grille, was one of the happiest and jolliest-faced women I have ever met. They rose and saluted us, and we returned the salutation. Then we sat and gossiped. There were some who were from the old country and one old cheery dame from Scotland. We joked, discussed education and the time, laughed, enjoyed ourselves. We even hinted at Labor politics. Time went on eagles' wings. How foreign and strange it seemed when I afterwards turned it over in my mind, and yet like a scent pervading a room there was something about it that was not alien.

As I have already written, the forest lands of Canada are curiously like home. Only their vastness marks them off from our West Highland hills and woods and rivers. Beyond the forests are the plains. Curious as it may seem, even there I get a glimpse of home, for they remind me of the flat land between Spynie and Lossiemouth. At one place the delusion was complete. The railway ran in a straight line as it does

across the Spynie plain, a road lay by it, and in the mid-view was the tall chimney of brickworks. There was even a village ahead set upon rising ground with a church spire in its midst. It was so much alike as to be ridiculous. Beyond the flat plains, golden under the ripe grain, are the old grazing rolling prairies familiar in many an enchanted story. One expects there to come across some careering herd of buffalo, or see the jolting prairie "schooner," or watch the wild wheel of mounted Indians with feather headpieces sweeping down upon a line of wagons, so well is the stage set for the show. One seemed to have been there in some previous existence which still remained dim in memory.

At Moose Jaw (how I pray that the old names will remain with their reminiscences and not be changed as Rat Portage, for instance, has been changed), we had an hour's pause in our westward way, and went out to see the harvest being gathered in. All around as far as the eye could see the fields were yellow to harvest. The ears rustled in the wind and whispered the music of plenty and peace. I thought of the breakfast-tables that were to be blessed by the treasure, and the many more that could be blessed by it if men did not intervene with their nefarious arts of gathering where they have not strewn and reaping what they have not sown. But in the harvesting there was no memory of hook and scythe, nor even of the simple reaping machine.

A huge, rattling engine moved along the edge of the standing corn, cutting the straw about a foot from the ground. The tops disappeared within chambers that whirled and rattled. Straw fell out behind; into a bag dropped discarded refuse like weed seeds; from a pipe projecting from the side poured a stream of wheat into a box cart that jolted along under it. One minute the corn was in the ear, the next it lay in the cart, winnowed and threshed ready for the market. The long lines of busy and merry harvesters, binding, carrying, heaping the sheaves, have gone; the loading of the sheaves later and the stacking in the farm-yard have gone; the hum of the threshing mill still later has gone. All the processes are done at the same time, and only two men are employed on the machine that does it. One day I was given a loaf of bread that ten hours before was growing in the field.

Finally, before the foot-hills of the Rockies are reached we pass over swamping lands abounding in reedy lochs where wild ducks splash and swim, and which reflect the blood tints and the gloomy blues of a

threatening evening sky. Cows and horses graze, lonely homesteads are passed, white alkaline patches like leprosy appear. After days of traveling the corn-growing lands are coming to an end, and the vast mountain barrier of the West approaches. All through these lands we have passed townships varying from cities to mere groups of houses. The roads are dusty; the buildings are of wood and tell of the pioneer; the prairie is around them; they look as though they had been amongst the belongings of some wanderer and had been dumped where they stand whilst he rested for a night or paused to see if there was a living to be found for him in the place. A wooden shed bearing the sign of a bank, another labeled a store, another a pool hall, generally front the railway. The fashion is observed, however, and women in short skirts, silk stockings, bobbed hair, stand at their doors and gaze at us as we crawl away. At the stations are tall brown elevators bearing the names of their owners in huge white letters, and proclaiming the omnipotence of wheat. The land is old but new; ramshackle but in order; the dwelling and working-place of men whose roots are elsewhere but who are digging themselves into this soil.

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Wherever we stop groups—sometimes big crowds, as at Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat, and elsewhere—come to greet us. They do not shake, they wring, our hands, our arms, our very bodies until our feet begin to totter. They talk of meetings a quarter of a century ago; in their exile they retain the memories of men almost forgotten. I speak to a ruddy-faced, gray-haired, stocky, genial man of our Aberdeen victory. As an Aberdonian he is proud of it. I recall Geordie and Willie Cooper. "Geordie," I say, "is dead. But where is Willie?" He draws himself up and looks with some surprise at me. "Man! I'm Willie." A bonny offspring of James Leatham talks of her father and Turriff. This one is from Fochabers, that parson tried to save souls in Burghead, and is now standing fast by Presbyterianism and declines to unite with Methodists and Congregationalists. Red cheeks and lively eyes come from Lossie. We are by the Waters of Babylon and for a minute or two, whilst the kindly officials allow the train to wait (they are always willing to make up time between stations in order to accommodate me), we take down our harps and sing an auld sang.

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The whole of this far-flung middle prairie land seems to be a Scottish colony. The most of them are Macs, and when they are not that they

are Frasers, or Camerons, or Lamonts, and under the plain disguise of Smith I have met a grand-daughter of John Galt. Peace and happiness be upon them all. As we cheered our farewells, I felt as though I had been privileged to have a small rehearsal of the gathering which we are told is to take place on Judgment Day.

Now, I have got to the Western mountains. Their soaring tilted plains of white limestone, almost bare above the talus of earth that lies at their base, are foreign and suggest Switzerland rather than the Highlands. But the clear rivers flowing over white stony beds and the pine-shaded roads are of the homeland. To-day I have been over the Great Divide that separates Alberta from British Columbia, and have felt that I have not deserted Scotland. The road has run by rushing waters. It has mounted by gloomy forests of spruce and pine. It has commanded far views of wooded valleys. Down its sides have tumbled mountain torrents, white with foam and splashing musically, and in the hollows of the hills lie deep tarns. I have walked for miles upon paths that seem as familiar to me as the ways of the Grampians, and buried in their midst I have found passes as rough as the Larig Ghru, and mountainsides strewn with boulders, keeping watch over the waters of a lake that reminded me of Loch Avon and the Shelter Stone by Ben Macdhui. My companions at that point had me pull our beds for the night and boil our kettle, for they too found home in this distant corner.



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## GENERAL

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